

***Review of education for students with disability in
Queensland state schools***

Department of Education and Training

February 2017

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Glossary

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
ADG	Assistant Director-General
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
C2C	Curriculum into the Classroom
CESE	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CYDA	Children and Youth with Disability Australia
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
DECO	Disability Education Coordinators
DSE	Disability Standards for Education 2005
EAP	Education Adjustment Program
ESS	Every Student Succeeding - State Schools Strategy 2016-2020
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act (US) (2015)
FASD	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
HOSES	Head of Special Education Services
HRC	Human Rights Commission
I4S	Investing for Success
ICP	Individual Curriculum Plan
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPS	Independent Public School
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
MSSD	More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OT	Occupational Therapy
P-12 CARF	Prep to Year 12 Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework
PBL	Positive Behaviour for Learning
PD	Professional Development
PSD	Program for Students with Disabilities (Vic)

Glossary

QADA	Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (1991)
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
QCIA	Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement
PWDA	People with Disability Australia
RoGS	Report on Government Services
RTI	Response to Intervention
SDA	School Disciplinary Absence
SEP	Special Education Program
SES	Socio-economic status
SSDSE	Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment
ST	Speech therapy
SWPBS	Schoolwide positive behaviour support
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WSS-SLR	Whole School Support – Student Learning Resource

Executive summary

Ensuring that students with disability have inclusive and productive educational experiences has presented challenges for education systems around the world. Schools have struggled to value diversity and difference and turn difference into a tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Effectively responding to the challenges and opportunities of student differences – and ensuring that education systems and practices support *all students* engaging with education in a manner that allows them to realise their potential – requires the most careful crafting of policy, programs and practices.

Against this backdrop, and with a view to building on the progress that Queensland has made in the education of students with disability over recent years, the Minister for Education and Training initiated a wide-ranging independent review into the education of students with disability in the Queensland state school sector in July 2016. The purpose of this review was to examine the extent to which current policy settings effectively support students with disability reaching their educational potential and to make recommendations to advance the achievement of this goal.

Deloitte Access Economics was engaged to conduct the review and this report presents the review findings and related recommendations. Consistent with the broad-ranging nature of the review, its findings address all aspects of the state schooling sector's legislative, policy and practice environments as they relate to students with disability, including:

- The overarching policy goals and framework
- Workforce policy, training and capability development
- Leadership and culture
- Educational practice and the tools and mechanisms that drive and enable this
- Resourcing and the processes and governance that support this.

A broad and multi-faceted evidence base is required to comprehensively and systematically review and assess these areas. The review has drawn on an array of sources to inform its findings, including:

- A consultation process including close to 100 parent, student and school staff focus groups in a representative sample of 32 state schools across Queensland, and consultations with more than 40 representative, peak and advocacy groups
- An analysis of student administrative and outcomes data
- An online survey of parents, principals, staff, students and the broader community, which garnered almost 3,000 responses
- This was supplemented with 23 written submissions
- Academic research pertaining to the policies and practices that support outcome achievement for students with disability
- Findings from previous reviews and inquiries in Australia and internationally.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive evidence that has been assembled, there remain areas where further research, analysis and observation will be required to determine and refine details of various strategies and initiatives going forward. In this sense, this review report is not a substitute for the planning required to build a system of education that enables students with disability to achieve the highest attainable outcomes. It is, however, an important precursor to this and its findings and recommendations are intended to chart a course toward this.

Overarching review framework

Like other areas of social policy, there are aspects of the effective education of students with disability where a definitive view regarding leading practice is yet to emerge. However, in the majority of cases, the prevailing evidence provides a basis for identifying the features of schooling systems that support students with disability engaging with education in a way that enables them to achieve to the maximum of their potential.

These features are in many cases not unique to education of students with disability – they equally characterise high performing education systems generally (reinforcing the point that good policy for students with disability is good policy for all students). Together, these features provide a frame of reference for assessing the current policy, practice and resourcing environment in the Queensland state schooling sector as it relates to students with disability. By extension, they also provide a mechanism for identifying those areas where improvement could be made to bring the system more closely into alignment with leading international standards.

Presented under the three broad headings of policy, practice and resourcing, these features form the review’s analytical framework and are summarised below.

In relation to the **policy environment**:

1. Legislative obligations are enshrined in all aspects of policy and practice and widely and clearly communicated so that they are universally understood and adhered to by all those participating in the education system.
2. Expectations with regard to student outcomes – and the preconditions for their achievement – are clearly established and serve as the basis for system-wide accountability and performance monitoring.
3. The efficacy of policy and practice is continually evaluated and refined based on verifiable contemporary evidence.
4. Parents and carers can exercise reasonable levels of choice regarding their child’s education and have access to information required to effectively inform this choice. Parents and carers have access to affordable, accessible, effective mechanisms for raising concerns or complaints regarding their child’s experience with the education system.
5. Parents and carers are actively engaged in their children’s education such that the school and home environment can jointly reinforce students’ learning.
6. The system’s governance and leadership is geared toward driving positive change and installing a system-wide culture aligned with the established objectives.

In relation to the **practice environment**:

7. Teachers are knowledgeable about and skilled in the contemporary practices proven as effective in teaching in classrooms with diverse needs, including students with disability, via exposure and access to:
 - a. high calibre, contemporary pre-service training;
 - b. evidence-based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs;
 - c. real-time support and guidance, such that challenging classroom situations can be appropriately and effectively managed; and
 - d. constructive professional collaboration.
8. School leaders understand their legislative and policy obligations, are effective at relating these obligations to their teaching staff, and draw on available resources and information in developing practice for students with disability.
9. Schools effectively use student data and information to monitor and support student achievement, and transitions between education settings is aided by systematic, timely, universal information exchange.

10. Schools' physical characteristics support and encourage inclusion and differentiation.

In relation to the **resourcing model**:

11. Resource allocations balance the need to recognise differential educational need with the costs of accurately determining this in a way that reinforces the system's broader objectives.

Key findings and recommendations

Ensuring that education systems are equipped to support *all* students in achieving to the maximum of their potential, at a practical level, continues to present a global challenge for policymakers, sector leaders and indeed all those associated with the delivery of education. As recent reviews and inquiries across Australia have demonstrated, there remains a disparity between today's policy and practice and that required to inclusively support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential.

In this sense, Queensland is not unique in the continued challenges it confronts in re-crafting its state schooling system to align with leading contemporary policies and practice. Encouragingly, however, this review finds examples of leading international practice in Queensland state schools today. The simple imperative, therefore, is to continue working toward this standard being a universal one, such that every student with disability receives the high calibre education experience to which they are entitled.

The gains to these students from doing so are evident from the educational outcomes achieved today, under which many students with disability achieve as highly as their peers. Moreover, the review finds that up to half of the variation in learning outcomes observed among students with disability could be eliminated by ensuring educational practice *consistently* meets the best standards evident in the Queensland state schooling sector today.

Lifting the Queensland state schooling sector to this consistent standard – and, over time, transcending it – requires all features of the system's design working harmoniously towards this end. With this in mind, and in accordance with the scope of this review, the review findings and recommendations fall under three broad banners:

1. The **policy framework**, which articulates the goals the system is working towards and prescribes the system's overall architecture and governance
2. **Effective practice** and the requisite capability among principals, teachers and all those interacting with students with disability
3. The **resourcing model**, and the features it must include to support the achievement of the established policy objectives.

Consistent with the diverse and wide-ranging nature of the review recommendations, the ease and immediacy with which they can be implemented varies. Naturally, the planning that follows this review will establish a detailed approach to implementing the accepted review recommendations. However, in the interests of aiding this process, the review's recommendations are classified either as: (i) implement immediately; (ii) implement over a longer time period; or (iii) for further review. The review has also given rise to a range of questions for future research.

Policy framework

The policy framework refers to the overarching system elements and features which determine the environment within which schools operate – that is, the system architecture that supports and guides the education community to achieve its established vision and goals.

International obligations and increasing accountability at a national and international level mean that schooling systems must be equipped to drive improvement in outcomes for all students. Expectations and responsibilities for the education of students with disability are higher than at any point in our history. More than ever, there exists an expectation that education systems will develop strong policy frameworks that drive towards more inclusive schooling systems and better outcomes for *every student*.

While the articulation of the framework here is orientated toward students with disability, it is ultimately a framework geared toward recognising the educational needs of *every student*. Its design considers: (i) expectations relating to education delivery; (ii) sector and school-level accountability; (iii) system governance and leadership; (iv) enrolment policy; and (v) the involvement of parents and carers.

Expectations relating to education delivery

Legislative obligations work in concert with community expectations to lead the case for improvement in educational practice and outcomes for students with disability. For these obligations to have greatest impact, they must be reflected in all relevant policies and programs and be recognised and understood universally among education leaders and practitioners.

There is a range of binding international obligations and legislative requirements that create a legal imperative for education providers to deliver the best possible education for students with disability, within an inclusive environment. Inclusive education for every student is both an educational means and goal. This review finds that policy should strive to reflect these principles. It is important that all educational practitioners throughout the sector are guided towards achieving these goals (and held accountable for doing so). Inclusive education, both as a goal and a practice, should be recognised as everybody's business.

Policies in place across Queensland were examined for reference to students with disability, and in particular, reference to guiding legislation. This review finds that the Department's broader strategic policy could be revised to ensure clearer reference to, and acknowledgement of, students with disability and the responsibilities that all those interacting with them are expected to uphold.

Awareness of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education (DSE), as well as the broader policy and legislative context, was tested through this review's survey and consultations. The findings indicate that there is scope for the Department to further strengthen the understanding of the prevailing legislation surrounding students with disability and its implications for school leadership and practice.

Recommendation 4-1: Legislative and policy awareness

- The Department should revise existing policies to ensure alignment with legislative obligations and, in particular, that the imperative to improve outcomes for students with disability is adequately reflected. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should ensure legislative requirements are translated into accessible guidelines. The support available for principals to navigate this area – including access to inclusion coaches and training – should be promoted widely and expanded if necessary. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

There are generally high levels of goodwill and commitment toward the achievement of outcomes for students with disability across the Queensland state schooling community. However, the review finds that a level of ambiguity exists regarding what these outcomes

are – that is, the expectations and aspirations for students with disability – and how they will be achieved. There are varying views regarding the features, characteristics and experiences of an inclusive schooling system. While the term ‘inclusive’ is commonly used, its interpretation and application vary considerably. Across Queensland, inclusive education is frequently used as a synonym for special education.

Creating an environment that supports and enables students with disability to achieve their potential requires a set of overarching objectives capable of effectively guiding and driving policy and practice. These objectives must align with legislative requirements, be definitive in their intent and provide a basis for demonstrating what the sector is striving to achieve and, in turn, how it will go about achieving this. A clear and ambitious vision is essential to effective action and better outcomes.

While it is important this vision not work to demarcate students with disability from the broader student population, affording a heightened level of priority to these students necessarily means recognising them as a priority cohort for action. Acknowledging that visions and objectives have only modest capacity to drive change, an accompanying plan for action is critical to making progress.

To this end, the existing *Inclusive Education Statement* can be strengthened by reaffirming objectives, refreshing its definition of inclusive education – both as a goal and as a type of practice – and, in doing so, providing a stronger signal to all schools regarding the commitment of the Queensland Government to high quality achievement for students with disability.

This statement should also incorporate an implementation strategy, which outlines not only the expectations of the sector, but the path and timeline towards achieving them. In concert with the *Every Student Succeeding* strategy, the statement can then serve as the mechanism through which the message that the education of students with disability is everyone’s business is consistently disseminated across the sector.

Ultimately, achievement in this area needs to be elevated and shown similar weight to other educational priorities. This will act as an instrument to drive cultural change toward a more aspirational, outcomes-orientated, accountable environment that is committed to every student. Over time, culture will adapt to reflect these changing expectations. However the Department can instigate a change in culture, providing stronger leadership to drive improvements in inclusion and outcomes for students with disability.

A strong policy statement that embodies the attitudes and embeds the language of an *every student counts* ethos is also essential to establishing a positive, inclusive, outcomes-orientated culture. Culture influences, and is also formed and perpetuated by, actions and behaviours at all levels and needs to be supportive of the goals for inclusive education. Indeed, it is among the most critical pre-requisites to the achievement of a system that is fully committed to generating the highest outcomes for every student.

Recommendation 4-2: Statement and implementation strategy

- The Department should establish a shared statement of the goals of inclusive education and develop an implementation strategy, to reflect the aspirations, goals and timeframes that the sector is committed to. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Recommendation 4-8: Culture change strategy

- The Department should conduct a culture assessment and implement a culture change strategy to reform perceptions and expectations of students with disability throughout the education community.
 - This culture change strategy should include a review of language included within schools, including position descriptions and nomenclature.
 - This should be considered in conjunction with recommendations relating to workforce strategy. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Sector and school-level accountability

Performance measurement and monitoring

Schooling systems are increasingly operating in a performance orientated environment. It is critical that performance as it relates to all students, or disaggregated performance as it relates to students with disability and other subgroups, is reflected in a way that serves to drive improvement and accountability. The focus on the education of students with disability within such frameworks has lagged, partly due to a lack of consistent measures across jurisdictions. This should not be considered an impediment to embedding performance and outcome measures into performance frameworks.

Significant progress has been made in the collection and reporting of evidence at the school level over recent years and the Department has clearly stated its expectations that existing monitoring and measurement tools are designed to deliver improvement for all students.

However, the existing performance frameworks (and associated measures and indicators) do not incorporate specific reporting for students with disability. Further improvements can therefore be made in how outcomes for students with disability are monitored and measured. Measurable outcomes and indicators for students with disability can be researched, established and explicitly included in performance and accountability frameworks and reporting mechanisms. In some instances this may require additional data collection, however this should be viewed not as an imposition on the sector, but rather as a vital investment in maximising the educational outcomes for every student.

A focus on disaggregation of outcomes for students with disability can be introduced into performance measures at the school and system level. Greater disaggregation should not be considered antithetical to a whole school or inclusive approach for students with disability, but rather as an instrument for raising visibility and improving accountability.

The judicious monitoring and measurement of inclusive practice and other intermediate indicators known to be correlated with educational outcomes has a role to play in driving higher outcomes and can aid in establishing Departmental accountability for inclusive practice at a school level.

Recommendation 4-3: Performance monitoring and measurement

- The Department should seek to ensure performance and monitoring measures, including goals and targets which reflect the Departmental priorities, are in place at the school level.
- These measures should include intermediate indicators that allow monitoring of the presence – or otherwise – of the conditions that underwrite achievement among students with disability. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Monitoring and evaluation

In addition to monitoring and measuring school-level performance, the education system is also responsible for delivering and monitoring programs at the system level – for reasons of scale or for trialling evidence-based policies.

The policy areas addressed in this review are often characterised by significant complexity, active research, and policy debate (such as complex behaviours and inclusive teaching).

It is therefore critical for a jurisdiction like Queensland to continually evaluate its understanding of effective policy and practice as it relates to education of students with disability. While this information is partly obtained through school-level performance, it is equally important to evaluate policy at broader system level on a continuous basis.

The Department's Evidence Framework is a recent initiative which outlines the Department's strategic plan regarding how it will establish and use evidence. Building on this foundation, there are several steps that could be taken to further embed the role of evidence-based decision making across the state schooling sector:

- School-level evidence on effective practice, distributed through the Evidence Hub, could be enhanced by measuring and monitoring outcomes relating to students with disability at the school level.
- Although there has been an improved focus on implementation fidelity and improved practice in program delivery over time, greater effort is needed to embed evaluation of sector-wide programs and initiatives as a systematic activity.
- The introduction of greater disaggregation between students with and without disability in the analysis of sector-level outcomes data would enable broader consideration of the outcomes for students with disability, assist in better targeting resources where needed and identify sector strengths and weaknesses in terms of quality education provision and services for students with disability.
- Research on contemporary educational practice, as well as data on what works within Queensland schools, needs to be conducted and collated and shared across the sector.

Recommendation 4-4: Evidence base in the education of students with disability

- All programs should be implemented in accordance with the Department's overarching monitoring and evaluation framework, with lessons continually drawn from the evolving evidence base to inform refinement of policy and practice.
- Indicators of outcomes for students with disability should be incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of all schooling programs.
- The Department should continue to develop and promote the *Evidence Hub* and other evidence resources and, in doing so, ensure schools maintain access to contemporary research and resources relating to effective practice for students with disability.
- Teachers should be upskilled on data literacy, and an evaluative culture developed throughout schools.
- *This recommendation should be implemented immediately.*

Sector governance and leadership

In a high performing education system, leadership and governance serve as powerful drivers of outcomes and effective forces of change. In the immediate term, this will mean assembling a taskforce of the calibre and authority required to take the accepted recommendations of this report forward with urgency and purpose. Over the longer term, it will mean ensuring that the achievement of outcomes among students with disability is afforded the highest priority by the sector's leadership and that system governance and leadership is geared toward installing and maintaining a sector-wide culture aligned with the established objectives.

Over recent years, the Department has vastly increased its commitment and visibility in the area of education for students with disability, including the notable establishment of the Autism Hub as a centre for research and professional development in the field, and the employment of professional coaches. The Department is in a unique position to role model ownership of action for students with disability – in both state schools and regional offices – and can develop a stronger internal structure aimed at driving and sustaining this action (the nature of which may differ in the short term), until it is genuinely considered everyone's business. Efforts to improve outcomes for students with disability encounter resistance from a range of sources, for a variety of reasons. An agenda to improve outcomes for students with disability must be cognisant of these factors, but not dissuaded by them, and those responsible for executing this agenda must be confident they have the requisite resources and authority to pursue it.

Effective governance and leadership must also support the acknowledgement and, as appropriate, incorporation of stakeholder views into policy and practice design. This review notes the Department's current engagement with some stakeholder groups, but finds that it could more systematically engage with and support the sector and its various stakeholder perspectives.

Recommendation 4-7: Sector governance and leadership

- In the short term, the Department should introduce a taskforce aimed at implementing the recommendations of this review that are accepted by the Government, and building the foundations required to progress the Department's vision of inclusive education. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - A senior officer should be assigned to this position with an appropriate level of authority to lead the implementation of an inclusive education agenda.
 - The taskforce should be multi-disciplinary and should comprise members from policy, program and operations areas across the Department.
- A communications and engagement strategy for the broader disability and school education sectors should be established in the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
- In the long term, system governance and leadership must appropriately maintain this area of policy as an area of priority, and balance the need for a visible function for disability and inclusion, with the integration of inclusive principles and disability awareness across all areas of the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

Enrolment policy

Consistent with the legislative framework outlined earlier, it is a widely held view among academics, advocates and community groups alike that the default setting of education for students with disability should be in regular schools, and that a system should strive towards universal delivery in this mode of education. Domestic and international policy encourages education providers to not just deliver the best possible education for students with disability, but to do this within inclusive settings.

The international evidence is clear that these are the environments that best support outcomes achievement among students with disability and indeed that best support high performing school systems overall.

Enrolment policy should be made with consideration of the benefits (as expressed in long term educational and wellbeing outcomes) as well as the costs (including the impost of educational choices on the families and the cost to the system of providing school education) of alternative school settings, as well as explicit reference to these legislative obligations.

However, enrolment policy must be pragmatic in balancing the pursuit of what is an increasingly accepted preferred model against the systems that today's policymakers and sector leaders have inherited, wherein regular schools are not currently universally suited to meeting the educational needs of all students with disability. It will accordingly take time, and require the effective implementation of the recommendations of this review, before Queensland schools are universally equipped to educate all students with disability to leading contemporary standards.

With these elements in mind, a shift towards more mainstream school settings must be carefully planned and executed, within the broad framework of iterative improvements in inclusive practice across all schools.

Recommendation 4-5: Special school enrolment policy

- The Minister's policy for enrolment of students with disability in special schools should be periodically reviewed following assessment of improvement in practice in regular schools and a review of the role and operation of special schools. *This recommendation is for further review.*

Parent and carer involvement

Strong and informed parent and carer involvement is a hallmark of an effective policy environment, characterised by parents and carers having the knowledge and capability to advocate for their children through formal and informal avenues.

School education can be positively enhanced through parent and carer engagement (as can the home environment through engagement with the school and school staff). While the review has uncovered instances of highly effective involvement of parents and carers in their child's education and the tailoring of students' education experience to their unique needs, it has also found that practice in this area is extremely variable. As such, improvements in the consistency with which the education sector involves parents and carers in their child's education is an essential element of improving outcomes for students.

Every school should be welcoming and supportive of the rights of all students who are entitled to enrol in their chosen school. From the evidence assembled to inform this review, it is apparent that Queensland parents can be subject to a range of influences, at the school level, to discourage enrolment in regular schools and classrooms. Acknowledging that this issue has a range of origins, parents must be well informed of their rights and have access to quality information and resources to support their child's enrolment at their local school. Without an active body of community organisations providing effective advocacy, parents and carers lack the information required to make the best decisions for their children and lack the support they often require to pursue action in the event that the sector falls short of meeting their requirements.

As well as effective engagement at the school level, ensuring the best possible outcomes for students with disability requires parents and carers having access to mechanisms that aid them in voicing concerns or raising complaints regarding the education experience their child is receiving. Protracted complaints are damaging to all parties – for the Department in regard to litigation costs, and for children with disability who are often kept out of school for long periods of time. They also tend to generate high levels of counterproductive anxiety for all parties. The existing complaints mechanisms for parents to take issues forward with the Department and with external bodies should be monitored to ensure they are meeting the needs of the whole education community, including the schooling sector, parents and the broader public. It is important that processes be established to encourage fair and respectful conciliation. It is also essential that transparent reporting and analysis is in place.

Recommendation 4-6: Community and parental engagement

- In order to enable parents to make informed decisions, the Department should disseminate advice to schools, parents and the broader education community on the effectiveness and appropriateness of different settings, with regard to the long-term outcomes of students.
- The strength of parental advocacy at the school level should be bolstered through the facilitation of discussion groups, dissemination of resources for parents, and referral to advocacy groups.
- Monitoring of complaints should be undertaken centrally and should be granted a high priority by the Department.
 - This will enable the Department to build consistency in how complaints are treated throughout the state, and will serve to limit the escalation of complaints and lessen the periods of disruption to a student’s participation in school.
- *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Effective practice

An examination of effective contemporary practice in inclusive education was conducted and then cross-referenced with the data collected through surveys and school consultations about practice at the school and system level. While the review has not conducted a practice audit, it has nevertheless observed a broad sample of the practice taking place in Queensland state schools and allowed for an assessment of the concordance of this practice with leading international approaches.

Many of the challenges discussed are common across other jurisdictions, and are by no means unique to the Queensland state schooling sector.

Practice elements considered below include: (i) curriculum and pedagogy; (ii) behaviour management; (iii) workforce capacity and capability in inclusive education; (iv) professional collaboration and information sharing; and (v) physical environment.

Curriculum and pedagogy

Many students with disability are able to achieve results commensurate with their peers, provided the necessary adjustments are made to the way in which they are taught and assessed.

It is widely accepted that the goals of curriculum and pedagogy in inclusive education should be about ensuring, as far as possible, that *all students* can participate in the same learning.

The current P-12 Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework (P-12 CARF) is supportive of a whole school approach. This approach, within the Queensland context, has built on best-practice models including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Response to Intervention (RTI).

There are opportunities for further improvements in the adoption of the whole school approach, and the delivery of education within classrooms according to the P-12 CARF. The implementation of the P-12 CARF could also be aided through a revision of the materials and guidance associated with teaching and learning. Specifically, there is potential for resources currently produced by the Department about the development and delivery of a pedagogical framework to be revised to use similar language to the resources that advocate the whole school approach.

The review found that many schools and teachers, while committed to improving outcomes for all students, struggled in practice with implementing a whole school approach. Teacher survey respondents identified the main challenges of differentiation as the lack of teacher capability to differentiate, and the amount of time needed for preparation.

A coordinated response to improve whole school practice offered throughout the state would need to ensure adequate workforce capability and resourcing to provide classroom-wide adjustments.

The review sought to understand the nature and extent of individual adjustments for students with disability. Teachers are expected to use a range of individual adjustments to provide support for students to adopt the Australian Curriculum. Where students with disability require adjustments to year-level expectations, teachers must develop an Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) with parents and carers, to adjust the learning focus and determine the learning expectations.

ICPs were generally recognised as an effective tool for differentiation and inclusion in the classroom. Their use has corresponded with a large increase in the proportion of students with disability accessing the Australian Curriculum. It will be important for the Department to monitor their use over time within the context of a whole school approach.

Recommendation 5-1: Curriculum and pedagogy

- The implementation of the P-12 CARF should be aided through a revision of the materials and guidance associated with teaching and learning. The guide to developing a pedagogical framework at the school level should be explicitly linked to the P-12 CARF and whole school approach resources offered by the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The use of Individual Curriculum Plans should be incorporated into system-wide monitoring and data analysis, and monitoring of their use should aim to ensure schools are working towards modifying age-appropriate curriculum for delivery in classrooms. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Behaviour management

Behaviour management policy

Students with disability in Queensland schools are subject to greater use of school disciplinary absences (SDAs) than students without disability, as evidenced throughout consultations with teachers and parents, and in examination of the administrative data.

One of the reasons for this can be traced to a poor understanding of the link between learning and behaviour. The Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students templates and guidelines encourage articulation of behaviour management strategies with reference to the school's learning strategy, however this intention has not fully translated into actions across schools.

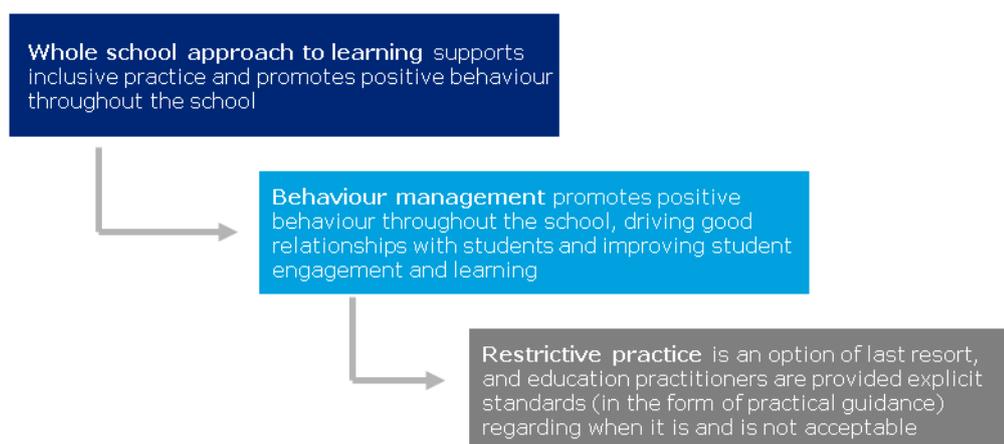
Use of SDA as a measure of engagement should be incorporated into measurement frameworks and used to measure improvements in policy change over time. In order to drive improved engagement over the long term, schools need to understand the relationships between teaching practice and behaviour of students.

This is the broad intention of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) and the whole school approach outlined in the Queensland whole school policy. The sector could allocate additional resources to ensure schools are translating the intention of the Responsible

Behaviour Plan for Students into practice – and this could be achieved through the training associated with PBL. Indeed, given the weight of evidence behind it, there is sufficient justification for supporting implementation of PBL with a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and commensurate resourcing and support from the Department.

Under a preferred approach, the use of behavioural management techniques, including restrictive practices, should sit as part of a broader school policy relating to effective teaching and learning. An example of a behaviour cascade framework reflecting this is outlined in Figure i below.

Figure i Desired behaviour management framework



Restrictive practice

The use of *restrictive practice* is an area of policy that all jurisdictions are challenged by. Consultations undertaken throughout this review and submissions made to it indicated the use of restrictive practice in Queensland state schools. They also revealed uncertainty and ambiguity regarding the circumstances under which restrictive practice is and is not permitted under current policy.

This review finds that restrictive practice should be used as a measure of last resort to prevent harm to staff and students and that the likelihood of such scenarios arising can be significantly reduced through culture, pedagogy and effective behaviour management.

The schooling sector needs explicit standards regarding the instances where restrictive practices are and are not acceptable and clearer and more practical guidance needs to be issued to principals, teachers and other school staff.

Despite reporting procedures being in place for planned and unplanned use of restrictive practices, no centralised data is collected or analysed on the use of restrictive practice across schools. The central and regional offices should play an ongoing role in monitoring the use of restrictive practices within individual plans and monitoring the unplanned use of restrictive practice.

In the longer term, increasing the capacity of schools to improve practices as they relate to differentiation in teaching and learning, and behaviour management, is a necessary precursor to reducing restrictive practices to the greatest extent possible.

Ultimately, Queensland state schools should set a target pursuant to the elimination of restrictive practices. This is an aspirational target, however it is one that will ultimately lead educational practitioners to adopt whole school inclusive practice.

Recommendation 5-2: Behaviour management and policy

- The Department should ensure that all schools articulate their Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students in conjunction with a school-wide policy that incorporates differentiation in teaching and learning. The Department should review its current suite of behaviour management policies, including the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, to drive the adoption of these principles among schools into the future. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - One potential model for this, which is currently already in place across Queensland schools, is PBL. The Department should trial the implementation of PBL with strict implementation fidelity.
- The Department should incorporate disaggregated use of SDA for students with and without disability into headline measures of outcomes for schools, regions and the system as a whole. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Recommendation 5-3: Restrictive practices

- Uncertainty and risk associated with the use of restrictive practice by teachers should be reduced through clear, unambiguous advice from the central office, and the requirement that restrictive practice use is articulated in a Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students.
- The Department should measure and monitor the use of restrictive practice (both planned and unplanned) with the aim of minimising use to the greatest extent possible. The Department should examine existing methods of data collection across schools to collect this information. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

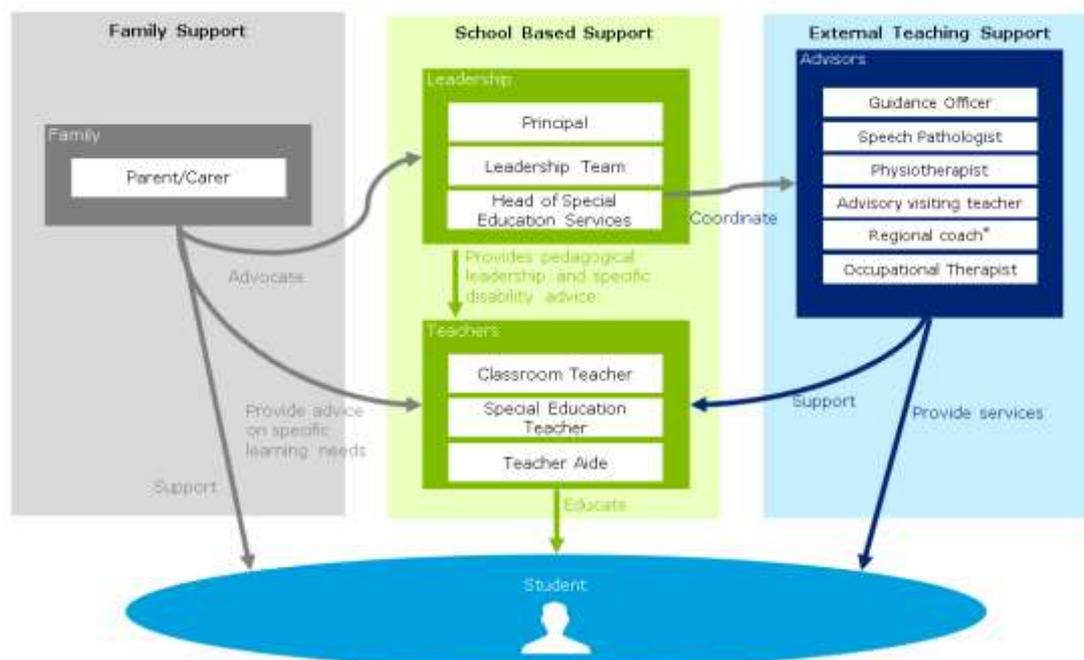
Workforce capacity and capability in inclusive education

Achieving the established goals for students with disability relies on capacity building across the Department's administrative and support portfolios and, most particularly, in its schools.

School principals and leadership teams require support to build knowledge and skills in inclusive education and cultural transformations, and to develop and deliver pedagogical frameworks which support the effective education of every student.

The workforce at the school level represents a complex mix of skills and relationships which intersect to create a supportive framework for all students (Figure ii).

Figure ii Example of a school level workforce to support education of students with disability



In an effective school working environment, different staff play complementary roles in enabling learning for students with disability.

- Teachers are responsible for delivering curriculum to students with a range of different abilities and translating a school-level pedagogical framework into practice.
- School leaders are vital to the success of students and the school. They are responsible for communicating the intention of policy to the teachers at their school, managing their school’s improvement strategy, and ultimately leading the delivery of practice within the classroom.
- Under a more inclusive title, the Head of Special Education Services (HOSSES) can play a larger role in professional development, the development and teaching of whole school curriculum, and in the advancement of all staff in the education of students with disability.
- By working collaboratively with specialists from outside education, schools can deliver a service for students with disability which incorporates their personal and health needs, as well as provide additional support and training to teachers.

Coordinating an approach

The Department is best placed to provide leadership in building professional development. Coordinating this across Queensland’s teaching workforce of over 52,000 teaching and non-teaching staff is a major undertaking that needs to be mindfully approached if the best results are to be achieved. A specific branch within the Department could serve as the organisational hub, to ensure the workforce can build its inclusive education capability over time. This branch should be responsible for coordinating all aspects of professional development recommended throughout this review, including internal professional development, liaison with teacher education faculties, development and distribution of professional learning resources.

This branch should also have responsibility for driving a workforce strategy which builds the skills the Department wants in the classroom through selection and development of staff:

- **Hiring structures** which outline inclusive education practice as a selection criteria will, in the long term, help drive the market towards adoption of these skills and aptitudes.
- **Ongoing professional development** is necessary for teachers to be able to continue developing their skills in teaching and learning differentiation, and behaviour management.
- Access to **real-time training** for specialised situations is necessary in ensuring teachers can get access to resources relating to specific disabilities and student types.

Pre-service training

Education academics and teachers have noted that competencies reflective of teacher professional standards, particularly the skills needed in contemporary classrooms with diverse students, can be more consistently adopted throughout the initial teacher education curriculum. Teachers, principals and academics consulted throughout this review have pointed to the current state of *pre-service training* as inadequate for the task of achieving more inclusive schooling. Initial teacher education programs are not delivering the curriculum required for school staff to develop these skills – with particular reference drawn to practical education within diverse classrooms and instruction in UDL.

Specialist resources

This review acknowledges the importance of specialist support, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech language pathologists, in directly working with students with disability, and in helping to develop teachers to better provide support for students. The principal method of delivery of these services presently is through staff allocated directly to schools and Special Education Programs (SEPs), as well as the itinerant staff located within regional offices.

These highly specialised human resources have a strong base outside the state schooling sector itself, and other systems within Australia incorporate models with schools working collaboratively with external specialists. Into the future, the Department should continue to consider service delivery options that intersect with the disability sector to complement the services delivered by the Department, particularly for high needs students or students in remote parts of the state.

Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability

- The Department should introduce a function designed to coordinate professional development in the area of inclusive education across the state schooling sector, with the structure of this function incorporating existing areas of professional development. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should work with universities to ensure adoption of inclusive education curriculum, and utilise existing levers for doing so. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should conduct a review of its workforce selection, retention and promotion model, including the following elements. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
 - Consideration in **selection** of professionals into the workforce.
 - **Induction processes** which introduce staff to the environment they are likely to face, the culture they reflect, and the standards of practice they will be supported to uphold.
 - **Effective professional development** – revised with a view to ensuring that quality content is delivered, and that sustained improvement is undertaken.

Wellbeing and support for school staff

The education of students with diverse learning needs has been described as challenging for all school staff. In addition to requiring development of advanced educational knowledge and understanding, teachers need to deal with complex and challenging behaviours, and are faced with numerous emotional challenges given the difficulties children with disability can face with existing educational programs. Teachers should not be dissuaded by these challenges and must be supported by the system when teaching students with a range of abilities. Change in the expectations of teachers should be accompanied by a clear expectation of levels of support to accommodate that change.

Professional collaboration and information sharing

Inclusive education is a complex area of teaching practice, and as a profession, educators and school leaders are often required to consider a significant volume of research to inform their practice and management policies. The central office has a role to play in collating and synthesising this research, and disseminating this across the entire education community in an accessible and readily applicable fashion.

School-level analytical capacity

Similar to other jurisdictions, the schooling sector has in recent years made significant progress in the development of school-level analytical capability, including through provision of data and access to evidence based tools and strategies. These resources and capabilities have not been fully utilised to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs. The central office has a key role in assisting schools to adapt these tools to aid in school-level analysis of the education of students with disability.

Recommendation 5-5: School-level analytical capability

- Schools should be provided with advice on how to utilise their information bases to determine effectiveness of approaches for students with disability. Education practitioners should be upskilled in data literacy and how to utilise data relating to a wide range of achievement and diverse learning needs. This focus on students with disability should be introduced alongside broader developments with the Evidence Hub. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

Professional collaboration

It is apparent from the learning tools developed through the More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) initiative, Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C), and other resources examined throughout this review that the Department does distribute evidence-based resources relating to inclusive education to teachers and principals. However, according to both principals and teachers consulted during this review, assistance in applying this knowledge to their teaching could be improved.

The central office has recently worked to establish a resource base for use in schools around practices including Universal Design for Learning and Response to Intervention in schools, and plans to publish these resources externally. Formal and informal information sharing opportunities between educators may further strengthen educators' capability to deliver inclusive education. Communities of Practice and the existing HOSES conferences are an exemplar of this type of activity.

As a central function, and in recognition of the information disparity found in school consultations, the Department has a role to play in ensuring that all schools are kept informed of contemporary leading practice and opportunities available to them. An existing array of resources offered by the Department introduces teachers to differentiated teaching and learning, and highlights further study teachers can do in this space. A number of effective teaching and development models, which are in place to varying degrees across Queensland state schools, can help to transfer skills and knowledge between teachers. Facilitated opportunities for teachers to discuss their practice, and share their stories, with one another would promote better understanding of teaching practice for students with disability.

Recommendation 5-6: Professional collaboration

- The Department should effectively utilise existing levers to facilitate knowledge sharing among staff – including good news stories as they relate to students with disability, and examples of effective practice. Particular attention regarding collaboration and sharing should be applied to students at transition points – including the transition from pre-schools and early childhood development programs into primary school; and from primary into secondary schools. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Physical environment

Schools' physical design and characteristics play an important role in creating an educational setting conducive to diverse groups of students – including students with disability – learning as effectively as possible.

The principles of Universal Design should be applied to the school environment so that it is suitable to provide education for students with a range of needs. The review finds that existing infrastructure in Queensland is not purpose built to achieve this end and widespread modernisation will take time.

Consultation within the Department highlighted that considerations of design, as they relate to access for students with disability, are currently under consideration. This process should ensure that no new buildings are developed without an explicit consideration of the Department's inclusive education statement and implementation strategy.

Resourcing model

In 2015, the Queensland Government released *Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland*. This policy paper outlines the importance of using resources to support student learning and commits the Department to develop a model for state school resourcing which is (1) simple, (2) predictable, (3) flexible, and (4) based on need. These four principles provide a mechanism for ensuring that this review of resourcing is consistent with the directions of broader state school resourcing in Queensland. Accordingly, they are adopted as the overarching point of reference in this review.

Like all areas of social policy, school resourcing generally – and resourcing for students with disability specifically – operates within fiscal constraints. The imperative, given this, is to ensure that resources are allocated and used in ways that support attainment of the highest educational outcomes for students that they can. The challenges associated with practically achieving this are challenges that all schooling systems continue to confront – the goal of optimal resourcing is one no jurisdiction has been able to fully achieve.

Against this backdrop, the state schools sector should be working towards two mutually reinforcing ends: (1) to ensure that students with disability are provided with the adjustments they need to ensure full participation in the classroom, and (2) to move practice to a more inclusive model in which individual adjustments become less necessary. For this reason, this section examines resourcing for students with disability from the perspective of individual adjustments, and how these are supported, as well as the provisions for whole school support.

Orienting resourcing towards student need

A resourcing model which supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential is one which ensures that resources are targeted in accordance with variation in educational need across the schooling system, including as it manifests among students with disability. That is, one where schools whose students require relatively greater levels of adjustment and educational support to achieve learning outcomes on the same basis as their peers receive relatively greater levels of resourcing.

Individual adjustments

The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is established on a measure of educational need (the EAP Profile). The EAP profile is intended to serve two purposes – (1) guide staff in determining an appropriate educational response to a student's disability, and in mainstream schools (2) allow the system to allocate resources in accordance with relative needs as reflected across schools.

Evidence provided to this review by guidance officers was that the EAP profile has aided in determining appropriate responses to support students with disability. However, consultations and the survey highlighted a misalignment between the diagnostic model under the EAP and actual resourcing needs of students with disability.

EAP incorporates, as a first step, the diagnosis of a disability under one of six categories. The use of this diagnosis to determine eligibility for additional support raises the possibility that students with additional educational needs originating from non-recognised EAP categories are not adequately reflected. A diagnosis-based model of resourcing has been shown in other contexts to lead to *diagnostic substitution*¹ - where parents and carers seek diagnosis of a particular disability to gain access to a program. The current system of verification and validation for resourcing provided under the EAP has been noted in consultations to be burdensome and as producing an over-reporting of the need for educational adjustment (albeit a well-intentioned one). While this does not result in over-resourcing at the system level, it does potentially impact the distribution of resources across students and schools.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) aims to recognise and reflect the educational adjustments of students in the context of their school environment and existing whole school support. Through reference to a set of qualitative practical descriptions of what is meant by adjustment and differentiated practice it is, in principle, able to benchmark the levels of educational need for students with disability relative to other students across the state (and country).

Because of its relative state of infancy, NCCD lacks a method of quality assurance to ensure accuracy in collection, or consistency across the population. For this reason, is not *currently* suited as a measure of need for the purposes of resourcing. However, its potential power as a measure of adjustment which achieves both aims of a concept of need is acknowledged.

The recent announcement by the Australian Government that its funding would, for the first time, be allocated according to the NCCD definition of disability,² provides a signal that Australian Government funding policy will over the longer term give consideration to establish the NCCD as a method of resource allocation more broadly.

The Department should continue to engage with the Joint Working Group on the development of the NCCD collection. The suitability of NCCD to determine funding should be reviewed at appropriate junctures in its development. In the meantime, The Department should similarly conduct a review into the feasibility of modifying the diagnostic and verification elements of the EAP, to better reflect a range of educational needs.

Recommendation 6-1: Reviewing the measure of disability

- The Department should continue to engage with the Joint Working Group on the development of the NCCD collection.
- The suitability of NCCD to determine funding should be reviewed at appropriate junctures in its development.
- In the meantime, The Department should similarly conduct a review into the feasibility of modifying the diagnostic and verification elements of the EAP, to better reflect a range of educational needs.
This recommendation is for further review.

Whole school support

Whole school support involves significant investments in professional development and staff time in developing and implementing programmatic and teaching reform. It is

¹ Coo, et al, (2008)

² Joint Statement by Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham and Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, *Responsibly investing in education*, 3 May 2016

apparent from consultations that the amount, and type, of resources allocated to whole school support is not perceived as commensurate with the expectations placed on schools to adopt whole school practice.

Currently, 25% of funding under the students with disability staffing model is targeted towards helping schools provide adjustments for students who are not verified with a disability, but who have a disability as defined under the DDA. This 25% funding component is informed by enrolment numbers and the socioeconomic status of the school.

Evidence collected throughout this review indicates that this resourcing element is not necessarily meeting its intended purpose:

- Across the school consultations conducted to inform this review, schools commonly failed to acknowledge the 25% allocation when asked about their equity allocations, or allocations for students with disability.
- At the same time, parents expressed a view their child was missing out on educational adjustments if they did not meet eligibility criteria.
- Administrative data shows that the prevalence of disability (as captured through either EAP or NCCD) is highly correlated with socio-economic status. However, this measure is not necessarily targeted at addressing educational needs as they relate to students with disability requiring individual adjustments.

Resourcing should be allocated towards need with a clear goal and direction in mind. The current model is intended to signal to schools that the 25% allocation is provided to aid in educational adjustments for students with disability, however the effective use of these resources at the school level is impeded by uncertainty regarding their expectations and intent (including the students that they should be directed towards).

This review has made recommendations to revise the way in which students requiring individual adjustments are measured by the system and resourced. While these revisions are being made, the Department has the potential to strengthen the messaging that accompanies funding to help schools adopt better whole school practice and support all students with disability (whether verified or otherwise).

Recognising local context

Leading resourcing models provide resources in a manner which allows for flexible targeted use towards priority areas of investment as determined by school leadership. However, school-level decision making alone is not sufficient for improved outcomes through investments of resources. Appropriate supports and accountabilities must be in place to ensure effective school-level decision making and resource use.

In consultations examining resourcing for students with disability, schools raised that the use of resources at the school level is only partly influenced by the design of the resource allocation model. That is, use of the whole school allocations noted above varies. Current resourcing policy enables this through the allocation of resources for students with disability to the school, not the student,³ allowing schools to make the most appropriate investments, given their cohort and school context.

However, there are limits on flexibility under the current model. Resourcing for whole school support and individual adjustments is presently allocated under fixed resource types which, despite some scope to adjust the resource mix at a local level, can work to limit flexibility in resource use.

³ Despite this, there is a justified perception amongst many parents that resources which have been attracted based on an enrolment of their child should be allocated directly to their child.

Simple and transparent resourcing

The motivation for simplicity of design in resourcing models is to ensure ease of understanding and administration for both governments and individual schools. This in turn limits costs of compliance and oversight and supports transparency and, by extension, confidence in the system. However, the benefits of transparency must be weighed against those associated with reliably recognising and addressing variation in educational need. In this sense, the measure of need and its associated assessment mechanism is, as noted above, a central consideration.

More broadly, resourcing for education of students with disability is driven by a number of complex instruments which comprise a unique combination of different measures of need, including two separate but similar measures of socioeconomic status. This complexity can send mixed signals to principals regarding how resources should be used. In particular, it can contribute to uncertainty regarding the intended purpose of different resourcing streams and how closely tied to individual students or student groups these streams are.

Schools should be provided with a simple representation of their resourcing which has been allocated for students with disability, clearly outlining the basis for this allocation and the expectations relating to its use. Clarity of expectations will support schools in more effectively utilising the available resources to meet the education needs of their students on a whole school level.

Predictable and sustainable funding

School-level predictability

Schools are able to operate and plan most effectively when they have an understanding of their expected resourcing over time. Consultations conducted as part of this review highlighted that the current approach to funding based on Day 8 enrolment figures leaves schools exposed to risk in enrolment fluctuations throughout the year. This is not an issue unique to students with disability, however the high levels of per-student resourcing that some students attract can amplify its impacts.

To help address this, the system provides some resourcing at the regional level and distributes to schools on an as-needs basis throughout the year. While in principle the timing and frequency of resourcing allocations could be modified to ensure ongoing alignment with enrolment levels, the administrative complexity associated with pursuing this risks being prohibitive.

Sector-level predictability and sustainability

Sustainability in school resourcing is a notion which must balance overarching fiscal constraints with the need to ensure resourcing appropriately reflects changes in educational need. As history in many jurisdictions has shown, disability services is an area where fiscal management must be especially prudent.

Since 2011, growth in enrolments of students with disability in Queensland state schools has outstripped general enrolment growth almost four times – 6.0% per annum compared to 1.6% per annum⁴. Resourcing for students with disability has not *systematically* kept pace with enrolment growth, however measures have been taken to ensure resourcing adequacy. Within the overall fiscal envelope in which school resourcing is governed, growth in resourcing for students with disability should continue to recognise changing educational need, within the context of the broader school resourcing framework.

⁴ Department of Education and Training administrative data

Moving forward

Resourcing for students with disability should be (1) based on need, (2) flexible and respectful of local decision making, (3) simple, and (4) predictable. This review has identified potential improvements to existing resource arrangements based on these considerations, and outlined a set of guiding principles which the Department should consider in refining future resourcing arrangements for students with disability.

This review finds that there is an immediate need to generate a greater understanding among the schooling community – those responsible for school-level resourcing decisions in particular – regarding the intended use of the alternative resourcing streams for students with disability. Schools should be guided to utilise resourcing for students with disability in the context of the broader school resourcing model and recognising both whole school and individual student needs.

This would support more effective resource use and provide a message to schools that the system is committed to enabling them to deliver whole school support in addition to individual adjustments for students with disability. Accompanying communications should explicitly link to the whole school support policy and P-12 CARF, with the expectation that these flexible resources are used to implement those policies.

Recommendation 6-2: Aligning resourcing use with its intended purpose

- The messaging to schools that accompanies resource allocations intended to provide additional support for students with disability should be strengthened. The purpose and intent of this resourcing needs to be clearer and the basis for accountability stronger.
- Schools should be encouraged to consider the range of individual student needs within a whole school context and use their total available resource allocations to maximise student outcomes. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Over time, the resource allocation model for students with disability should continue to increase its orientation toward educational need, with consideration given to the scope for NCCD to support this. An appropriate balance between precision and simplicity must continue to be struck. The benefits of flexibility in supporting effective use of resources to meet whole school and individual student need should continue to be pursued in conjunction with the supporting guidance and oversight measures.

Recommendation 6-3: Future funding for students with disability

- The Department should consider resourcing for students with disability within the broader context of total school resourcing and in light of the proposed directions for NCCD. Resourcing arrangements should aim to support more targeted allocations informed by educational need across different settings. *This recommendation is for further review.*

Towards greater inclusiveness and higher outcomes

Creating a schooling system that supports every student achieving to the maximum of their ability has been – and to a significant extent remains – a major challenge for education systems across the world. While the legislative imperatives have become stronger and their intent less ambiguous, the challenge of crafting all features of an education system to practically and harmoniously foster and promote high quality

education for all remains an enduring one. In many respects, this is not surprising. Historical approaches have run counter to what is now a well-established and widely accepted philosophy of inclusive education. Unwinding the engrained effects of this takes time, but must be pursued vigorously to achieve progress.

The findings of this review demonstrate that Queensland's state schooling system is making progress in achieving universality in the standards of education it provides but that, like so many of its peers, further progress is required if it is to consistently support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential. A level of change and improvement will be required across all aspects of the system and among all its participants. These changes will of course take time – some more than others – and will require reassessing how resources are deployed and utilised across the system. But their mutually reinforcing nature means that through disciplined and coordinated reform, material progress be made in terms of academic achievement, engagement and wellbeing for students with disability.

This report outlines a clear imperative to improve current settings, a mandate to guide change, and clear, overarching directions on where and how that improvement can and should occur. Encouragingly, every member of the state schooling community consulted through this review demonstrated a commitment to achieving better outcomes for Queensland students with disability. With a carefully developed action plan and the right drivers and information in place, this review finds the necessary reform achievable.

The accepted recommendations of this review will need to be carefully paced and introduced in an appropriate manner – implementation must be deliberate and purposive if it is to be successful in this complex area. However, the gains for students with and without a disability mean the returns to effectively doing so are significant and the case for staying the course therefore a strong one.

Deloitte Access Economics

1 Introduction

The expectation that students with disability will be afforded the same educational opportunities as their peers, and that education systems have a legal and social responsibility to ensure this expectation is met is a global imperative that has become increasingly unequivocal as legislative foundations have been progressively strengthened. However, practically ensuring that education systems are equipped to support *all* students in achieving to the maximum of their potential continues to present challenges for policymakers, sector leaders, schools and indeed all those associated with the delivery of education.

As recent reviews and inquiries across Australia have demonstrated, there remains a wide disparity between today's policy and practice and the effort required to inclusively support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential. Recognising the potential for Queensland's state schooling sector to increase its pace of progress on this front, the Minister for Education announced this review of education for students with disability in Queensland state schools in July 2016. Its findings and recommendations – which draw on extensive research, data and consultation – are presented in this report.

Acknowledgements

Deloitte Access Economics would like to acknowledge the many teachers, school leaders, parents, students and organisations who gave generously of their time throughout the course of this review. We would also like to acknowledge the work of the many academics and policy experts who spoke to us throughout the Review and recognise the value that their specialist knowledge and deep experience provided.

Most particularly, Deloitte Access Economics would like to recognise the extensive guidance, direction and expert input provided by Professor Roger Slee, from the University of South Australia, who collaborated with us on this project. The findings and recommendations contained within this review should be attributed to Deloitte Access Economics.

1.1 A strengthening legislative and social imperative

In May of 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened the World Education Forum, entitled *Equitable and inclusive education and lifelong learning for all by 2030 – Transforming lives through education*, in Incheon, The Republic of Korea. Delegates at the Forum, including Heads of Government, “reaffirmed the vision of the worldwide movement for Education for All”. Paragraph 7 of the endorsed *Incheon Declaration and Action Framework (2015)* establishes the foundation for an inclusive education:⁵

“Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access,

⁵ World Education Forum (WEF), (2015)

participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all."

Further into the *Declaration and Action Framework*, in Paragraph 12, the signatories: "...reaffirm that the fundamental responsibility for successfully implementing this agenda lies with governments".

The outcomes of Incheon follow earlier declarations regarding the intent of inclusive education. In 1994, the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Educational Needs* was signed (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement is a statement on the education of all children with disability, which calls for inclusion to be the normal mode of education delivery. Representatives of 92 governments (including Australia) and 25 international organisations agreed to the Statement.

In 2012, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) published a statement condemning segregated special education and supporting inclusive education consistent with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) and Article 24 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (UNCRPD).⁶

Supporting Australia's binding international commitments are national and state anti-discrimination legislation and standards relating to the education of students with disability.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth) (DDA) embraces the social model of disability, while also setting out diagnostic categories.⁷ In doing so, the DDA emphasises the impact of cultural and institutional barriers in disabling and enabling people, and relates disability to the practical differences that exist between what people of different abilities are able to do. The DDA is supported by the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (DSE), which clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. Together, the DDA and DSE commit educators across Australia to ensuring that students with disability receive an inclusive and productive education.

At the state level, legislation such as Queensland's *Education (General Provisions) Act* (2006), *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act* (1991) (Section 44) and *Queensland Disability Services Act* (2006) further promote and protect the rights of children with disability in education. The intent and impact of these instruments is explored in Section 2 of this report.

1.2 From imperative to practice: the global challenge

The imperative to ensure *all students* – including students with disability – have inclusive and productive educational experiences has exposed limitations in education systems around the world. Diversity and difference has proven difficult to value and, moreover, to use as a driver to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

These limitations are in many cases artefacts of history – deeply engrained attitudes and practices that continue to prove challenging to shift. Their consequences have resulted in educational outcomes for students with disability being well below their peers and, as a result, life outcomes falling short as well. Indeed, a poor education is one of the key

⁶ UNICEF, (2012)

⁷ The social model of disability – in contrast to the medical model of disability – conceives disability as socially constructed and the result of interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. See PWDA for more information

reasons why the economic and social participation rate of Australians with disability is so low. People with disability are less likely to have completed Year 12 and are less likely to hold a post-school qualification. They are also more likely to be unemployed and earn significantly less income than others in the community. In fact, an estimated 45% of Australians with disability live in, or near, poverty.⁸

Recognition that Australia's education systems not only fall short of fully upholding the intent of our international obligations but require significant re-crafting if they are to deliver students with disability the educational and life outcomes they are capable of achieving has seen wide-scale review and inquiry over recent years. Leaders across several states and territories – often in response to incidents that have exposed systematic shortcomings – have sought to establish a clearer diagnosis of system failings and to chart a course toward improved practice and outcomes.

As the state of policy and practice currently stands, however, Australia has a way to go. Over the last ten years Australia has become strident in redressing disadvantages according to socioeconomic status (SES), gender, race, ethnicity and sexual identity policy. However, far less progress has been made nationally in the case of disability.

Effectively overcoming the challenges of student differences – and ensuring that education systems and practices support *all* students engaging with education in a manner that allows them to realise their educational potential – requires the most careful crafting of policy, programs and practices.

1.3 This review and its scope and purpose

The Minister for Education and Training announced a wide-ranging independent review of education of students with disability in the Queensland state school system in July 2016. The purpose of this review was to examine the extent to which current policy settings effectively support students with disability achieving to their potential and to make recommendations to advance the achievement of this goal.

Deloitte Access Economics was engaged to conduct the Review and this report presents its findings and the recommendations that these findings give rise to. Consistent with the broad-ranging nature of this review, its findings address all aspects of the state schooling sector's legislative, policy and practice environment as they relate to students with disability. As such, this review makes findings and reaches recommendations regarding:

- The overarching policy goals and framework
- Workforce policy, training and capability development
- Resourcing and the supporting processes and governance
- Educational practice
- Leadership and culture.

The overarching objective of this review is to promote the development of policy and practices that maximise the scope for students with disability to – like all students – achieve to the maximum of their potential. Recognising that, even with the strongest commitment and greatest urgency, the path to achieving this objective will take time, this review also considers how the requisite change might most appropriately be phased and the further work that is required to give this change the maximum likelihood of success.

1.3.1 Presentation of findings and recommendations

The evidence canvassed as part of this review and the analysis subsequently conducted has generated both a set of findings and, on the basis of these findings, a set of recommendations. Recognising that the issues that this review traverses are both complex and diverse; that the associated evidence is varied in its strength and

⁸ OECD. (2009)

conclusiveness; and that the distance between leading and current practice varies, the Review's recommendations are classified under three broad banners:

- **Implement now** – recommendations which, if accepted, can be acted on with relative immediacy.
- **Implement over an extended period** – recommendations which, if accepted, can be implemented in a staged fashion as the preconditions required to support their successful introduction are progressively put in place.
- **Further review** – recommendations which, if accepted, require the establishment of further evidence or a stronger level of consensus before implementation can be successfully embarked upon.

Supplementary to this review recommendations are a series of identified areas where further research may be considered in the interests of developing an even stronger understanding of the factors critical to ensuring schooling systems like Queensland's state schooling sector drive improved outcomes for students with disability.

1.4 Approach and methodology

The findings of this review are based on extensive primary and secondary sources of information, which provide a strategic and evidence-based guide to the future direction for the education of students with disability in Queensland state schools.

The **literature review** into policy and practice regarding students with disability draws on a comprehensive body of international academic literature as well as historical and contemporary policy documents (from both Queensland and other jurisdictions). This broad base of literature informs the foundational framework against which Queensland's current state schooling system is reviewed and, through this, the Review's findings and recommendations.

Stakeholder consultations were held from September to November 2016 and provided a core source of primary information regarding the areas of the Queensland state school system that are working well to support students with disability and the areas for improvement. The consultations were wide-ranging and included representation of all elements of the stakeholder environment as it relates to the education of students with disability. This includes Departmental officials, diagnostic group associations, educational support providers, teachers' and principals' organisations, advocacy organisations, school leaders, teachers, school support staff, parents and students, and the general Queensland community.

The **consultation process** included both face to face engagement and an online survey. The face to face engagement included close to 100 parent, student and school staff focus groups across a representative sample of 32 Queensland state schools.

The review team visited schools from each of the seven managing regions across Queensland and the diverse sample of schools that this review met with was representative across the dimensions of size, remoteness, SES and school type (primary, secondary, P-10/12, and special schools). In the interests of upholding the privacy and confidentiality of those who engaged with this review, individual schools have not been identified in this report.

Additionally, more than 40 stakeholder discussions were held with representative groups relevant to the education of students with disability in Queensland. These consultations provided invaluable information, personal experiences and guidance as to how best to support students with disability in Queensland.

The **online survey** saw 2,751 responses submitted from teachers, principals, parents, students and other school staff. The submitted responses provided raw data and meaningful insight into how the broad Queensland state school community views what is

working well for students with disability and highlighted areas to be considered for improvement.

It is important to note that the survey was entirely open to the public and, as such, everyone was afforded the opportunity to have input. However, by extension, the survey is not a representative sample of the Queensland population, but rather represents the views of specific individuals who are likely either interested in, or directly impacted by, the subject matter. This style of survey typically results in responses being predisposed towards strong opinions one way or the other on the subject matter at hand and, therefore, the evidence they generate has limitations in its application to a review of this nature.

The face to face consultations and the online survey were supported by **23 standalone written submissions** from a range of Queensland community stakeholders. These written submissions provided equally valuable and unique perspectives.

The review has been supported by **analysis of Departmental schooling data**. This analysis has been used to determine the conclusions that can be appropriately drawn regarding schooling engagement, inclusion and educational outcomes for students with disability in Queensland.

1.5 Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides context to the Review and, in doing so, outlines the social, economic and legislative imperative regarding the education of students with disability. It does this in two parts: through an analysis of outcomes achieved by students with disability in Queensland state schools, as a demonstration of the extent to which the schooling sector is currently achieving desired outcomes for these students; and through a review of the international, national and local legislative and policy context for school students with disability, to outline the overarching framework that governs the education of these students.
- **Section 3** sets out the review framework. It describes the features of a high performing school system as they relate to students with disability and then outlines – at a more detailed level – the elements of the policy environment, practice environment and resourcing model that characterise such a system.
- **Section 4** assesses the existing policy environment within the Queensland state schooling sector with reference to the review framework. This section draws on both policy documents and specific review evidence.
- **Section 5** assesses the existing state of practice within Queensland state schools with reference to the review framework. Evidence is presented on the extent of leading contemporary practice throughout the state and the current policies, resources and capability in place to support these practices are examined.
- **Section 6** assesses the current resourcing model as it supports students with disability and identifies scope for it to be strengthened in the interests of more effectively supporting the achievement of educational outcomes among students with disability.
- **Section 7** outlines a pathway towards implementation of the recommendations in this review, which acknowledges the supporting role that accountability, workforce capability, resourcing and culture play in enabling a system to drive improved outcomes.

Figure 1.1 Report structure



2 Context to the Review



This section of the report establishes the contextual background for the Review in the form of:

1. An analysis of outcomes achieved by students with disability in Queensland state schools, as a demonstration of the extent to which the schooling sector is currently achieving desired outcomes for these students.
2. A review of the international, national and local legislative and policy context for school students with disability, to outline the overarching framework that governs the education of this cohort.

A sound understanding of both elements was vital to ensuring that this review was conducted within an appropriate frame. Not only does it reveal the extent of the opportunity to improve outcomes for students with disability, it also provides for an understanding of the educational rights of these students as enshrined in law and internationally binding agreements. In doing so, it builds an economic, social and legislative imperative for improving education policy and practice as it relates to students with disability and, ultimately, for improving outcomes for these students.

2.1 Outcomes for students with disability in Queensland state schools

This section provides a view of the recent performance of the Queensland state schooling sector as it relates to students with disability, as measurable through the indicators in current data collections. It explores the volume of students with disability in Queensland state schools, their growth across the system, and their outcomes (in terms of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), absences, and longer term economic and social outcomes).

Throughout this section, two alternative means of classifying students with disability are utilised:

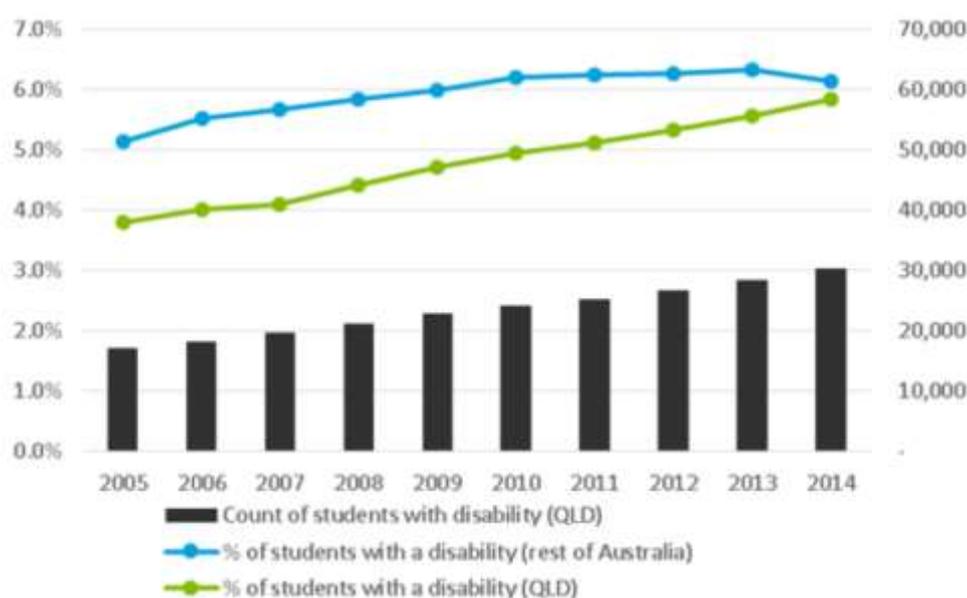
- **Education Adjustment Program (EAP)** – the current framework utilised in the Queensland state schooling sector to assess and recognise the educational need of students with disability. As students need to be verified by the state to receive funding under the EAP, this report refers to students as having a recognised or verified disability under the EAP. Students who are verified under the EAP have their educational needs assessed through a 36-part questionnaire. Students are then ranked by their educational needs and mapped to one of four EAP quartiles, ordered by level of adjustment. Students in the higher quartiles receive a greater level of per-student resourcing (delivered to schools as an allocation of teacher and teacher aide time). The six categories of disability which the EAP adopts are: Visual Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Speech Language Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Physical Impairment.
- **Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD)** – students who are classified as either receiving quality differentiated teaching or receiving a reasonable adjustment as defined by the DDA. Data relating to these students is collected under the NCCD, which is delivered in partnership with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Classroom teachers assess the *relative level of adjustment* required by students with disability, and are asked to map this to one of four levels (for which they are given

practical descriptors) – adjustments provided under standard classroom practice, then Supplementary, Substantial and Extensive adjustment. The NCCD is considered to be in its infancy and lacks a method of quality assurance or verification. While it is intended to be developed for use across schooling systems, questions remain as to its applicability.

2.1.1 National comparisons

The most comprehensive comparisons between students with disability in Queensland and the rest of Australia are contained in the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (RoGS), and allow for comparisons in the numbers of funded students with disability from 2005 to 2014. Over this time, the number of verified students with disability within Queensland grew by almost 6.5% per annum, compared to the average across the rest of Australia of 2.4% (Chart 2.1).

Chart 2.1 Proportion of funded state school students with disability, Queensland and rest of Australia, 2005 to 2014



Source: Report on Government Services (2016)

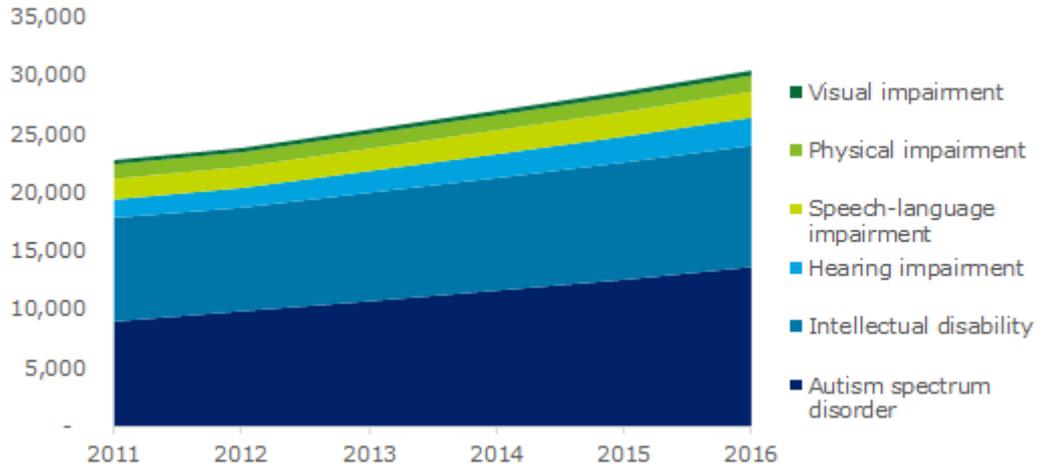
Note that this does not necessarily imply an evolution in demographics over the past ten years. RoGS compares the number of funded students with disability, and so this data reflects changes in policy settings over time as well.

2.1.2 Students with disability in Queensland state schools

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of students with an EAP-recognised disability in the Queensland state schooling sector grew by 6.0% per annum, while growth in all students was approximately 1.6% per annum.

Chart 2.2 and Table 2.1 show growth over this period by major type of disability, revealing the areas with the highest rates of growth to be Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and hearing impairment. ASD and intellectual disorder remain the largest major categories, representing almost 24,000 students or 80% of students with an EAP-recognised disability in 2016.

Chart 2.2 EAP enrolments, by major type (2011-16)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Table 2.1 Growth rate in EAP enrolments, by major type (2011-16)

EAP Major type	Average annual growth rate
Physical Impairment	2%
Intellectual Disability	3%
Visual Impairment	3%
Specific Language Impairment	5%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	9%
Hearing Impairment	9%

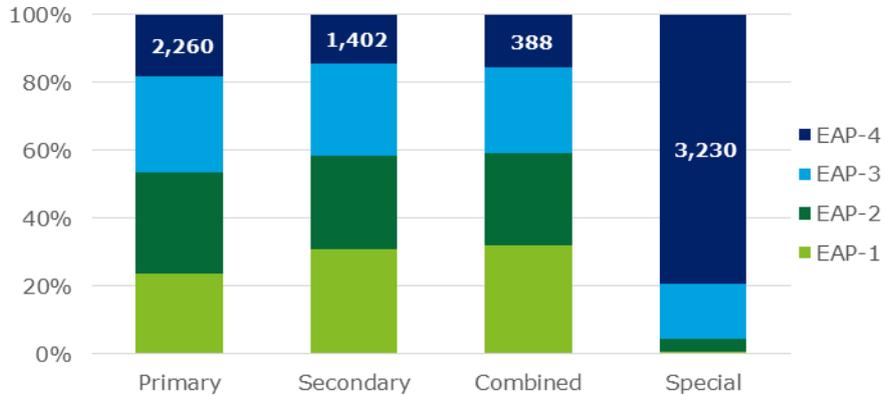
Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Growing prevalence of disability

- Growth in the population of students with a formally recognised disability vastly outstripped total enrolment growth in the Queensland state school system over the period 2011 to 2016. The greatest levels of growth have been students with Autism and Hearing Impairment.

The distribution of enrolments by school setting across EAP quartiles is shown in Chart 2.3. Special schools enrol the greatest total and proportion of EAP Quartile 4 students (that is, those who represent the highest levels of need for adjustment).

Chart 2.3 Students with disability within EAP quartiles, by school setting (2015)

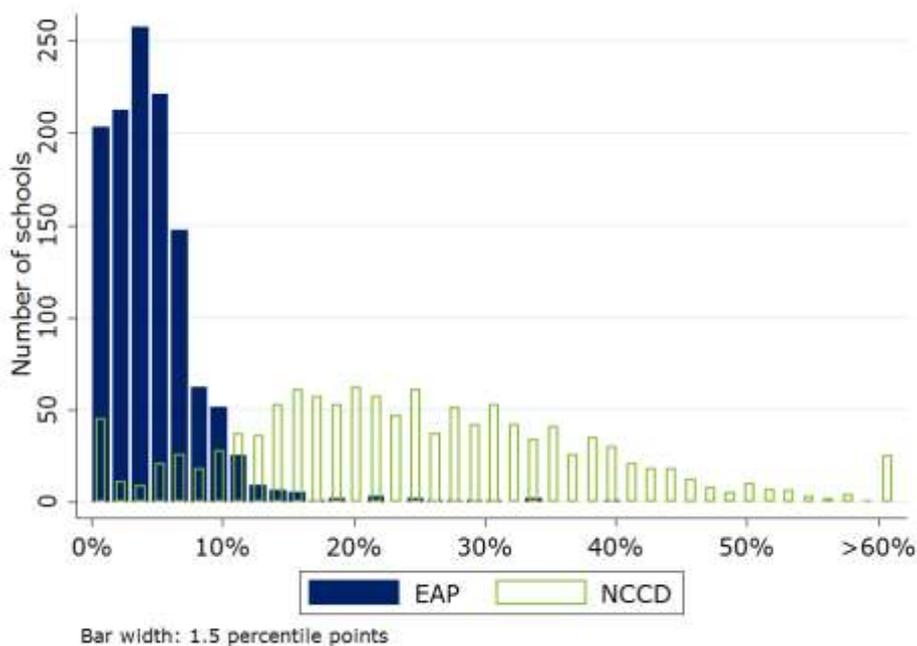


Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

As Chart 2.4 shows, most schools have very low concentrations of students with an EAP-recognised disability, however a small number have very high concentrations. In 2015, 136 mainstream schools – or 11% of all mainstream schools - had no students verified under the EAP, while 79 had more than one in ten enrolments categorised as having disability under EAP. In contrast, the distribution of NCCD concentration is considerably wider. For example, the majority of mainstream schools (1,068, or 87% of schools) counted more than one in ten students in the NCCD, and an additional 12.5% of schools counted more than four in ten students in the NCCD.

This suggests that despite the spread of NCCD students across more schools, compared to the spread of students recognised under EAP, there are a number of schools (notably, non-special schools) with concentrations of students with identified needs of adjustment.

Chart 2.4 Distribution of EAP and NCCD enrolments (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

2.1.3 Socio-economic status

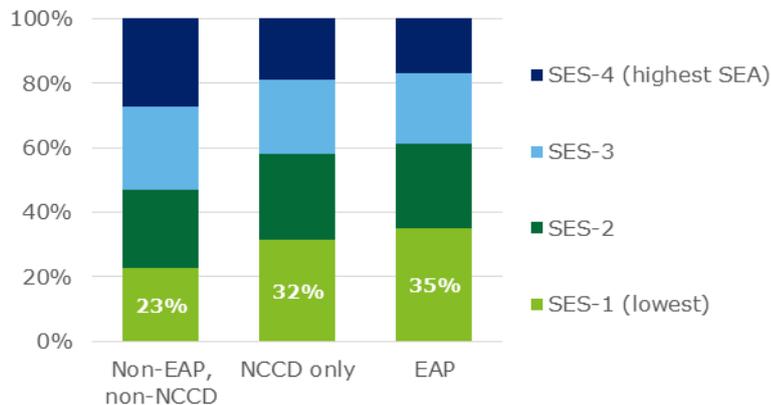
The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) measures the socio-economic status (SES) of students using a socio-economic advantage indicator based on parental education and occupation. SES groups in the analysis below are defined as quartiles of socio-economic advantage (SEA) scores.

As Chart 2.5 shows, students recognised under the EAP are more likely to be in the lowest SES quartile compared to both: (i) NCCD only; and (ii) students without disability. However, there exists a range of SES profiles across each group, underscoring that disability exists across all cohorts.

Socio-economic status and disability

- Students with disability are more likely to fall into the lower socio-economic status groups than students without disability.

Chart 2.5 SES profiles by EAP and NCCD identification (2015)



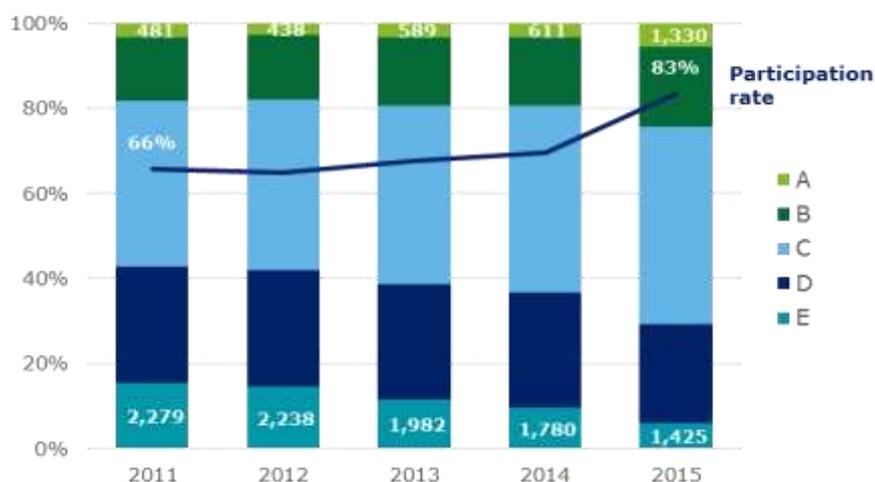
Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Note: SES profiles calculated as quartile groups using ACARA SEA student data.

2.1.4 Academic achievement

Queensland policy is for all students to be educated in and assessed against the Australian Curriculum. The participation of students with an EAP-recognised disability in A to E testing was 83% in 2015, having risen from 66% in 2011. In 2015, double the number of students with verified disability received an A (of those who received an A to E assessment) but, nevertheless, only 6% of verified students with disability received at A compared to 11% of students without a verified disability (Chart 2.6).

Chart 2.6 A to E English scores, verified students with disability (2011-15)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016). The above scores are not adjusted for the use of Individual Curriculum Plans, which are likely to moderate the number of higher scores.

These increases have occurred alongside a general increase in both the participation rate and in student scores, however the increase among students on the EAP (17 percentage points) has been sharper than their peers (10 percentage points). Australian Curriculum results are discussed further in Section 4.3.1.

The NAPLAN is an annual assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, covering skills in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy.

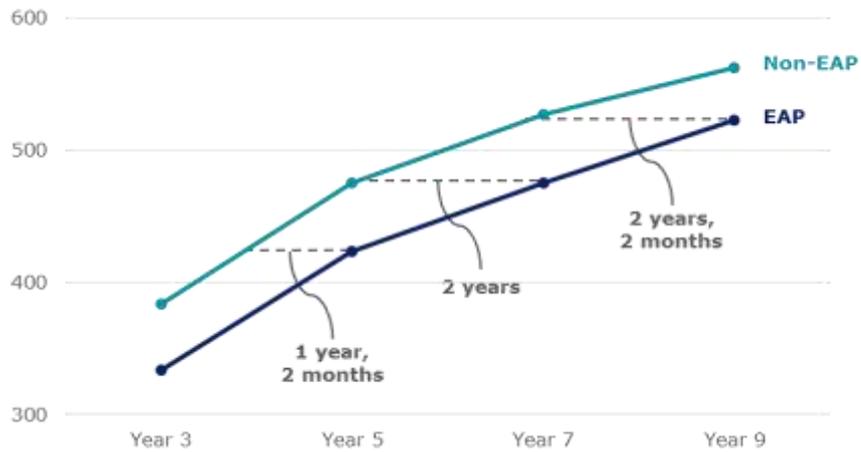
It is important to note that **participation** in NAPLAN testing is significantly lower for students with a verified disability, with over half of students with disability withdrawn or exempted from testing (Chart 4.3). This has implications for standardised assessment for students with disability and has a bearing on inclusive practice across state schools. NAPLAN participation is further explored in Section 4.3.1.

NAPLAN standardised scores are normalised on a point scale, such that 100 points is approximately one standard deviation from the mean of the sample. A comparison of NAPLAN scores between students with and without an EAP-recognised disability reveals a relatively persistent 50 point gap for each academic year.

When NAPLAN points are translated into NAPLAN Equivalent Years of Learning⁹, this suggests a difference in learning outcomes equivalent to 1-2 years of schooling.

⁹ This metric is calculated similarly to the definition by Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., Chisholm, C., Nelson, L., 2016, *Widening gaps: what NAPLAN tells us about student progress*, Grattan Institute

Chart 2.7 NAPLAN point scores, plotted as Equivalent Years of Learning

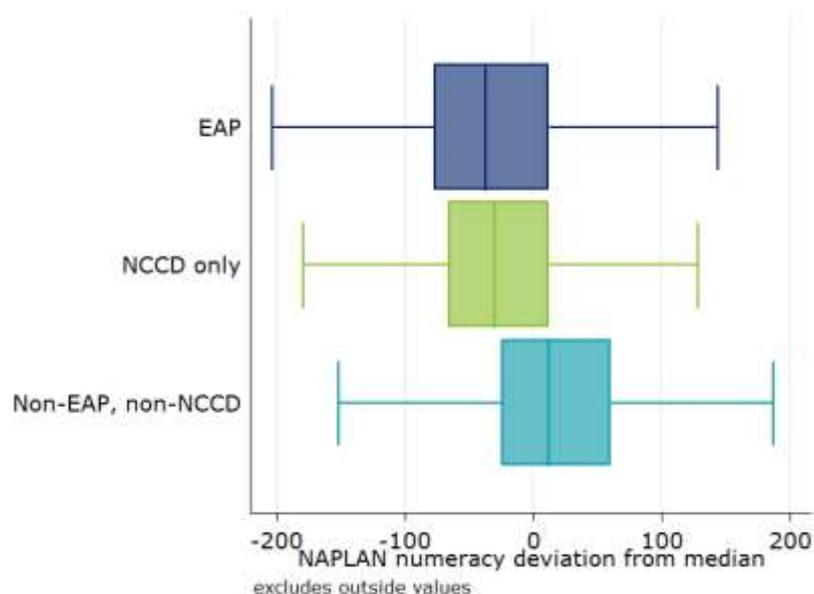


Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

As NAPLAN scores cannot be directly compared between academic years, the analysis conducted for this review compares a student’s performance (as measured in NAPLAN points) with the median performance of their year level.

Chart 2.8 shows that, on average, students with disability (either verified by the EAP or collected through NCCD) systematically perform lower than students without disability. However, it also illustrates the vast variation in the outcomes that these students achieve – the poorest performing students have a formally recognised disability but, at the same time, large numbers of students with disability achieve well above average. It is also important to note that similar spreads in outcomes are observed in the comparison selections of students.

Chart 2.8 NAPLAN numeracy deviation scores for students verified under EAP, Year 3 to 9 (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Note: Deviations from the median calculated as the difference between an individual student's score and the median score within their academic year. Results for each year and for NAPLAN reading following similar trends. Boxes calculated at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles. Whiskers calculated at 1.5 times the interquartile range (75th less 25th percentile).

Students with disability overall face poorer NAPLAN outcomes than students without – however it should be acknowledged that within this group, there is a great variation in achievement. This goes some way to demonstrating the potential for students with disability to improve achievement and, in some cases, reach outcomes commensurate with their peers.

NAPLAN outcomes

- While there is vast variation in how students with disability perform in NAPLAN, their outcomes are on average lower than their peers with the size of this gap estimated at between one and two years of learning.

Bridging the outcomes gap

To develop an evidence based understanding of what is achievable for students with disability, this review compared the variation in outcomes for students recognised under the EAP, after controlling for observable differences in student and school characteristics known to be correlated with learning outcomes.¹⁰ Any remaining variation can be attributed to a student's schooling experience – and therefore represents a gap in outcomes that can potentially be bridged through improvements in system and school

¹⁰ These control characteristics include EAP verification (quartile and major type), Indigenous identification, gender, age, part-time studies, SES, and previous NAPLAN score (prior ability measure).

policy and practice.¹¹ This analysis is outlined below and explored in further detail in Appendix D.

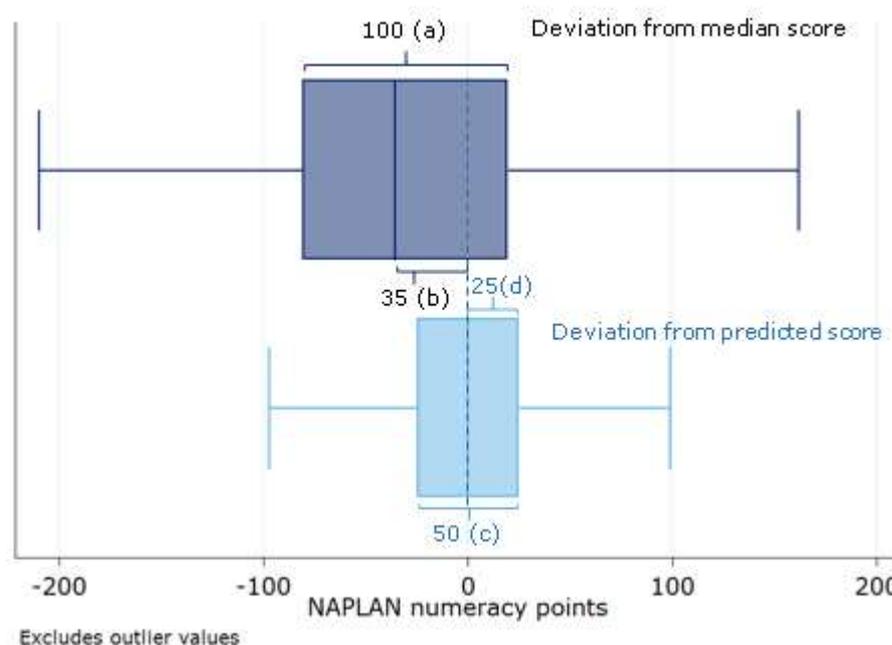
Chart 2.9 shows, for students verified under EAP:

- *The deviation from median score* – this represents the unadjusted variation in outcomes among students verified under the EAP (i.e. before controlling for student and school characteristics), by calculating each student’s NAPLAN score compared to the median score for all students in their year level.
 - As expected, there is significant variation in NAPLAN scores, which reflects a multitude of differences at the student, school and system level, as well as random measurement errors in NAPLAN testing.
 - The distance between the 25th and 75th percentiles (interquartile range) can be used as a relatively reasonable estimate of the gap in outcomes among students verified under EAP – the chart shows this gap is around 100 NAPLAN points (item (a) in Chart 2.9).
 - This translates to an outcomes gap of almost 3.5 equivalent years of learning on average. This gap is attributable to a range of factors outside of the schooling environment itself.
- *The deviation from predicted score* – this represents the adjusted variation in outcomes, which controls for a suite of student and school characteristics known (and shown) to be correlated with learning outcomes.¹²
 - After controlling for the average impact of observed characteristics, the interquartile range of outcomes narrows to approximately 50 NAPLAN points (item (c) in Chart 2.9).
 - The spread in outcomes (as measured as the gap between the 25th and 75th percentiles) of students with disability narrows to 50 points, after controlling for the average impact of observed characteristics. This translates to an outcomes gap of almost two equivalent years of learning on average.
 - A proportion of this remaining variation in scores is attributable to differences in classroom, teacher and school practice and pedagogy, as well as other variations across educational practices within the Queensland education sector.

¹¹ Two important caveats apply to the analysis: (i) students recognised under EAP have significantly lower participation rates in NAPLAN testing, which may produce biased (non-representative) results where participation is non-random; and (ii) variation in outcomes is likely to reflect a range of influences, including parental involvement in education, classroom practice and culture, among other unmeasured or unobservable factors likely to drive outcomes.

¹² For each student, a predicted score is estimated by controlling for the effects of student characteristics. These predicted scores allow student scores to be more readily compared on a like-for-like basis.

Chart 2.9 Spread in outcomes for students verified under EAP



Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of Department of Education and Training administrative data. Deviation in NAPLAN numeracy scores for students verified under EAP (Year 5, 7 and 9, 2016)

To determine an estimate of what a high performing system could achieve for students with disability, this review has assumed that the 75th percentile of NAPLAN scores, after controlling for observed characteristics, is a reasonable estimate of achievable best standards evident in the Queensland state school system today. Shifting the performance of school outcomes for students verified under EAP in line with this assumption means that, practically, all students could perform 25 points better on average (item (d) in Chart 2.9).

The review team has examined the implications of this gain in outcomes as it relates to the performance of students with disability relative to the overall system.

At present, the median student verified under the EAP performs at an estimated 35 points lower compared to the median score for all students (item (b) in Chart 2.9). This is comparable to one year and four months of equivalent learning.

If all students were to achieve at the 75th percentile of scores after controlling for observed characteristics, then the median differential in outcomes between EAP verified students and all students would fall to 10 points, reducing the outcomes gap to 5 equivalent months of learning on average.

Analysis undertaken to inform this review therefore suggests that up to half of the variation in outcomes for students with disability could be addressed, by ensuring educational practice universally meets the current best standards in Queensland state schools.

As the legislative underpinnings overviewed in Section 1 and again later in this section underscore, learning expectations should be equivalent for all students. Ultimately, in a totally inclusive and effective education system, the gaps in outcomes attributable to varying levels of need for adjustment could be completely addressed, where all student

needs are met by a high expectations, appropriately resourced and highly capable education system.

The recommendations throughout this report relate to the identification of systematic areas for improvement, as well as a strategy to ensure that policy to support students with disability in schools and classrooms is enhanced and further implemented.

As stated by one parent:

"My child is very bright, but thinks differently. I think he has the potential to go to university to study science or engineering. (Children like my child) are able to achieve a lot they just think differently and need support..."

The scope for improved learning outcomes among students with disability

- The empirical analysis conducted to inform this review demonstrates that, after accounting for the array of factors that influence students' learning outcomes, there is scope for significant gains to be achieved among students with disability via improved policy and practice.
- Indeed, variation in learning outcomes among students with disability could be nearly halved by ensuring educational practice universally meets the best standards evident in the Queensland state schooling sector today.

2.1.5 Indigenous students

The National Disability Strategy notes that, after taking into account age differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the rate of disability among Indigenous Australians is almost twice as high as that among non-Indigenous Australians.¹³ Other sources cite disability prevalence rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth as being 1.5 times as high as for their non-Indigenous peers.

Submissions to this review have highlighted that there are many factors which lead to high instances of disability in Queensland's Indigenous communities – including high levels of violence and trauma, poor parental mental and physical health, as well as alcohol and drug misuse. Intergenerational impacts are compounded due to unmet need (cyclical and growing problems), resulting in prevalent and complex issues.

Ear disease and associated hearing loss are highly prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) children.¹⁴ Foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) - a term for a range of impairments that result from the exposure of a foetus to alcohol consumption during pregnancy - is thought by researchers to be higher amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, although there is no national collection on this data.¹⁵

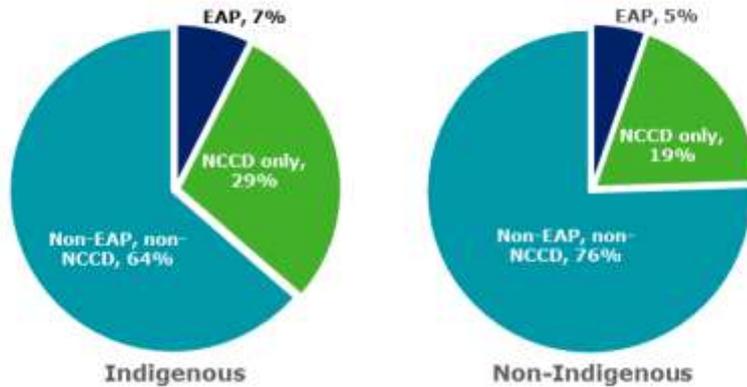
Chart 2.10 demonstrates that the prevalence of EAP-verified disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is higher than in non-Indigenous students (7% compared to 5%) and that the proportion rises to 36% when other students recognised under NCCD are included (compared to 24%). These statistics are relatively concordant with the general finding across Australia that disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is 1.5 times as high as for their non-Indigenous peers.

¹³ Council of Australian Governments, (2011)

¹⁴ Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW & AIFS), (2014a)

¹⁵ Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW & AIFS), (2014b)

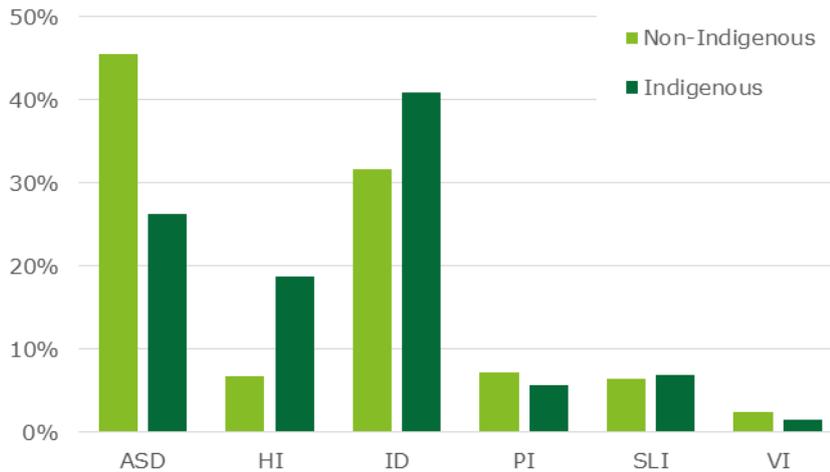
Chart 2.10 Distribution of EAP and NCCD, by Indigenous status (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Chart 2.11 highlights the prevalence of specific EAP disability types by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status. It shows that Indigenous students are more likely to experience hearing impairment and intellectual disability.

Chart 2.11 Comparing EAP types, by Indigeneity (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

The measured prevalence of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as recorded through both EAP and NCCD, does not vary considerably by geographic remoteness.

The *Senate Inquiry into abuse and neglect* recommended that the National Disability Strategy Progress Reports include specific data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. Section 7.2 provides recommendations to the Department on future research possibilities, and specific reference is made to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are over-represented in data for students with disability and for this reason, require specific consideration within the response to this review as well as in the reporting of data on students with disability.

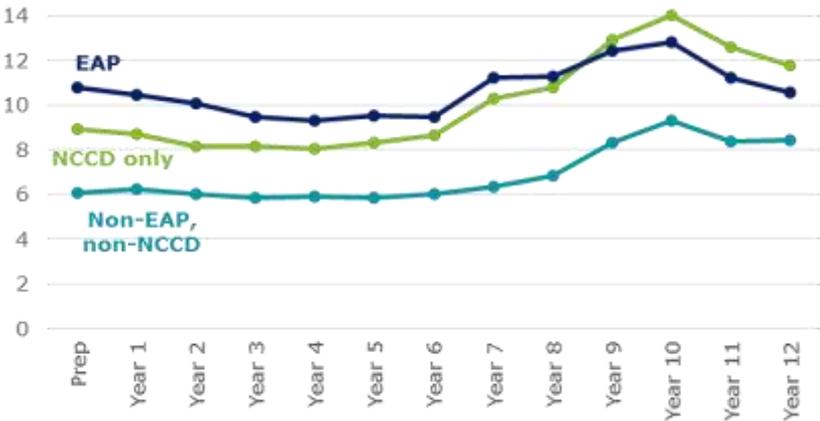
2.1.6 Engagement outcomes

Absences

Absences are an important indicator for schooling, as both an indicative outcome of student engagement, but also as an important reflection of input into learning and academic achievement. In this context, absences form an instructive measure of inclusivity, whereby higher absences are likely to be in part a product of poor inclusion and engagement by schools.

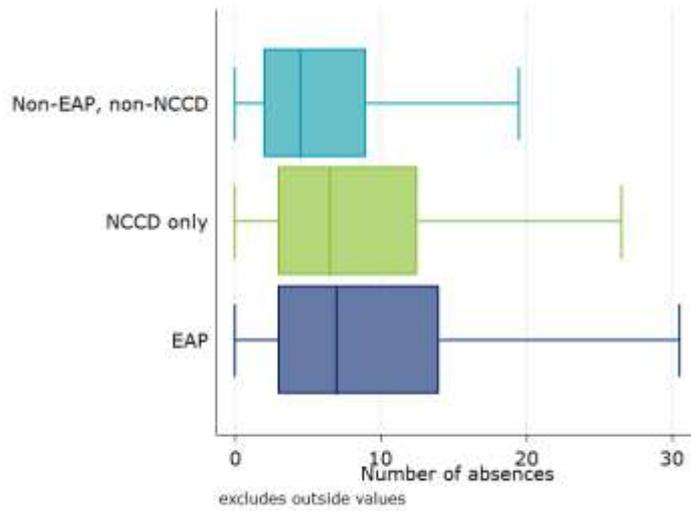
As Chart 2.12 shows, students with disability show higher absences than their peers, across all year levels. Absences are higher in secondary and combined settings than primary settings – a pattern consistent to that of students without disability – and are relatively stable across all years of primary schooling, before increasing markedly in secondary schooling. Chart 2.13 shows that the spread in average absences amongst students with disability is also greater, with a far greater proportion of students with disability experiencing ten or more absences over the course of the year.

Chart 2.12 Average absences per year, by academic year (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Chart 2.13 Distribution of absences (2015)

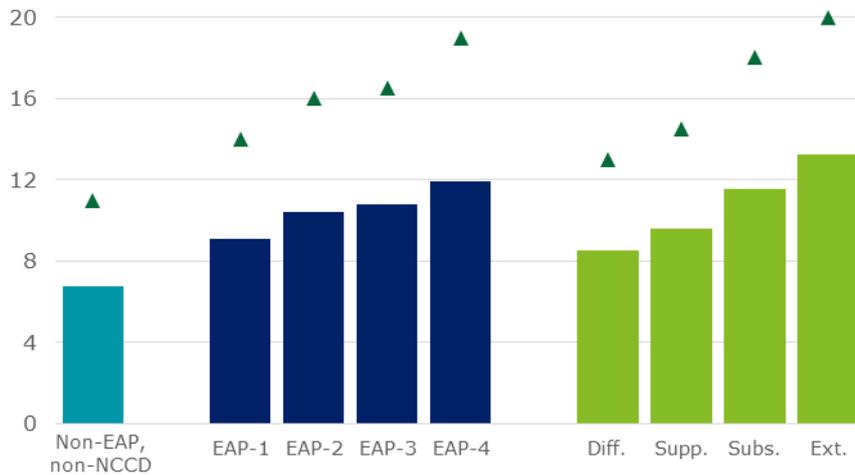


Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Note: Boxes calculated at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles. Whiskers calculated at 1.5 times the interquartile range (75th less 25th percentile).

Absence rates are higher for students requiring higher levels of adjustment, as shown in Chart 2.14. As higher levels of need may be associated with higher medical absences (rather than poor engagement absences), this is potentially due to reasons other than engagement outcomes for these students.

Chart 2.14 Average absences per year, by EAP quartile and NCCD level (2015)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Note: Markers at the 80th percentile for each group. Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data.

Students with an EAP-recognised disability average around 2 additional absence days (per year) compared to peers without disability. Male, Indigenous, lower SES and part-time students have higher absences on average. Students with an EAP-recognised disability with higher levels needs for adjustment will have on average an additional three absence days to those students with lower needs for adjustment. Students with an EAP-recognised disability with physical impairments have the highest rates of absenteeism, whilst

students with speech-language impairments do not have systematically higher rates of absenteeism to students without disability.

Absences

- Students with disability in Queensland state schools have significantly higher rates of absence than students without and this pattern increases with the severity of disability.

Further engagement outcomes

Additional indicators of engagement include School Disciplinary Absence (SDA) data, which is discussed in Section 5.2.1 in reference to Queensland's current behaviour policy. Students with an EAP recognised disability are significantly over-represented in the SDA data, with one in five students (21%) having an SDA applied, compared to 7.9% of students who do not have an EAP recognised disability.

2.1.7 Post school outcomes

Queensland records the post-school destinations for Year 12 completers,¹⁶ and is able to disaggregate these by disability status. Disability here is categorised by the Department as students who require significant education adjustments relating to EAP impairment areas.

Following Year 12, 33% of students with disability were in some form of paid employment, compared to 63% of those without disability.

Table 2.2 Post school employment destination, by disability status, 2015 & 2016

Post-school employment outcome	With Disability	Without Disability
Apprenticeship	3.0%	6.2%
Traineeship	1.8%	2.5%
Full-time employment	4.9%	9.7%
Part-time employment	23.4%	44.9%
Seeking work	33.9%	24.9%
Not in Labour Force	32.9%	11.8%
Total students	2489	77,778

Source: Next Step survey. Employment and study destinations of Year 12 completers, by Verified disability status, Queensland 2016 & 2015

Following completion of Year 12, 36% of those with a disability were in some form of study, compared to 62% of those without disability. While 40% of survey respondents without a disability were enrolled in a bachelor degree or higher, only 10% of survey respondents with a disability were enrolled. This stark difference in the outcomes of students with disability immediately after school is not completely attributable to the performance of the schooling sector, it does create an imperative to develop communications and bridges with post schooling constituencies.

¹⁶ Year 12 completers did not necessarily graduate with a year 12 certificate.

Table 2.3 Post school employment outcomes, by disability status, 2015 & 2016

Post-school study outcome	With Disability	Without Disability
Bachelor Degree+	10.1%	41.3%
VET Cert IV+	6.3%	8.2%
VET Cert III	8.4%	7.9%
VET Cert I–II	3.3%	1.1%
Other	7.9%	3.2%
Not studying	64.1%	38.3%
Total students	2489	77,778

Source: Next Step survey. Employment and study destinations of Year 12 completers, by Verified disability status, Queensland 2016 & 2015

Specific data does not currently exist on the **longer term economic and social outcomes** for students with disability who have attended Queensland state schools. However, evidence demonstrates that, on average, people with disability in Australia have worse educational, employment and social outcomes than those without disability.

The Queensland unemployment rate for people aged 15-64 with a reported disability was 9.9% in 2012, higher than the national average of 9.4% in 2012. And only 53% of people with a reported disability participated in the workforce in 2012, compared to 83% of people without a disability. The weekly median income of people with a disability was \$465, less than half of those with no disability at \$950.

In terms of social outcomes, people with disability aged 15-24 years old reported experiencing discrimination in 20.5% of cases. Over one-third of women and one-quarter of men aged 15 years and over had avoided situations because of their disability.¹⁷

Quality school education, in inclusive settings, plays an important role in improving these outcomes over time. Improved academic achievement has flow on impacts in educational attainment, employment and social outcomes. Inclusion at school leads to association between students with disability and their peers, which has positive social impacts later on in life.¹⁸

Finally, there is a rich body of research that does show the high costs of inequity in education across affluent societies.¹⁹ Improving outcomes for students with disability can raise the standards amongst the lowest performing groups of students within the country.

This sub-section (*Section 2.1*) has demonstrated there is a gap in academic and engagement outcomes between students with and without disability in Queensland state schools. These findings show there is **scope to improve outcomes for students with disability** and that improved policy and practice has the potential to be one of the most significant contributors to this.

The next sub-section (*Section 2.2*) outlines the **overarching policy and legal context for students with disability**, at the international, national and state level.

2.2 Legislative and policy context

A range of legal and policy instruments – at the international, national and Queensland level – govern the education of students with disability. The findings and

¹⁷ ABS, (2015)

¹⁸ Cologon, K, (2013)

¹⁹ See Wilkinson & Pickett (2009), Dorling (2010).

recommendations of this review must be made within these legal and policy parameters. Accordingly, key instruments are outlined below.

Importantly, these legal requirements exist at all levels – from Ministers of Education and the heads of Departments, to individual teachers and school support staff. They demonstrate that everyone must work to support the outcomes of students with disability.

Several reviews that have recently been undertaken in other Australian jurisdictions are also described. Although the findings of these reviews are not specific to the Queensland context or binding for the Queensland Government, they nevertheless provide an indication of contemporary directions in education policy for students with disability.

2.2.1 History of school settings

Public systems of education historically established and have subsequently maintained bifurcated or dual systems of schooling. Schools were not designed for all children. Many children had difficulty finding their place in or successfully completing school. Many failed, blamed themselves and left prematurely. Previously, many of these young people were able to transition into the unskilled labour market. Structural changes to the labour market have meant that these children now stay on at school. Many succeed, but others disengage and frequently are designated as having special educational needs.

Parents, educators, medical practitioners and concerned members of the community agitated for the establishment of schools for these children with disability who were rejected by ordinary schools.²⁰ Special schools were established to secure the right to an education for these excluded children. At the time, this was a progressive innovation. Special schools played a vital role in safeguarding the right of children with disability to an education. Thereafter most school systems developed regular schools and special schools in tandem.

A consequence of this perceived necessity to educate students with disability in special schools has been the division of children, their teachers and communities. Regular schools and special schools; regular school-teachers and special school-teachers; regular children and special children; parents of regular children and parents of special children have been institutionalised. Accordingly, a discourse of special education practice for special students is deeply etched into the education and social psyche.²¹ A more recent manifestation of this language is the *special needs child* or the *student with special educational needs*. This is a form of language that has been challenged by disability studies researchers²² and by organisations within the United Nations (UNICEF & UNESCO).

Litigation²³ and a growing resistance to separate schooling for children with disability from their neighbourhood peers and brothers and sisters in the latter half of the twentieth century resulted in a growing and global call for children with disability to be educated in their local regular or *mainstream* school. Education systems have accommodated this movement variously.²⁴

However, the architecture and the language²⁵ of schooling continue to reflect a division of children and services, and children with disability are frequently regarded as *additional students*.

²⁰ Danforth, (2009)

²¹ Slee (2011)

²² Gabel and Danforth, (2008), Gabel and Connor, (2014), Titchkosky, (2007)

²³ Minow, (1990)

²⁴ Norwich, (2008), Biklen, (1985)

²⁵ In this context, the architecture of schooling refers to the built environment of schools, to the assumptions underlying curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom organisation design, and to the culture of schooling. The language of schooling reflects these assumptions at a national level, in

2.2.2 International instruments

Much of policy relating to students with disability is sourced from legal cases in the USA. The USA is a similarly federated system with joint federal and state responsibility for education and a federal education act. The US system includes specific reference to Individual Education Plans, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and other facets of education for students with disability, that are now elements of policy for students with disability in jurisdictions across Australia.

US legislation is a global reference point for education jurisdictions and special education. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children (EAHCA, Public Law 94-142) was replaced by the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (revised in 1997 and 2004).²⁶ The notions of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and "Least Restrictive Environment (analogous to reasonable adjustment) find their source in this raft of legislation. This review acknowledges research pointing to the bureaucratisation of IEPs and to the interpretive latitude within legislative phrases such as *least restrictive environment (US)*, *reasonable adjustment*, and *unjustifiable hardship (Australia)*.²⁷

Further information on recent reforms to the education of students with disability in the United States of America is contained at Appendix C.

International documents bind Australian education providers towards ensuring students with disability receive the same educational treatment as everyone else. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993) first laid out the technical framework to which governments should adhere in establishing an integrated education.

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference (UNESCO 1994) where inclusive education was viewed as a human rights issue. This conference is held as a high-water mark in affirming the importance of an inclusive education in the neighbourhood school for students with disability, and for strongly registering the belief that this was preferable to separate special schooling.

The United Nations has continued to press for inclusive education for students with disability through subsequent conventions, declarations and statements.

In 2008, the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** was ratified. It establishes the need to ensure that opportunities are afforded to people with disability in all forms of life, including for children with regard to education.

The UNCRPD, drafted in 2006 and effective from May 2008, sets out the right of children with a disability to access an inclusive education on an equal basis with others. **Article 24** (Education) mandates that:

"Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability."

It also requires that:

"Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion."

the retention of a language focused on adjustments, and in instruments such as NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum regarding their suitability for diverse abilities.

²⁶ Ibid, page 35. See also <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view> (retrieved 19th December 2006).

²⁷ Morton and McMenamin, (2011), Slee, R. (2014)

As a signatory to the UNCRPD, the Australian Government and state and territory jurisdictions are obliged to ensure that students with disability are afforded these rights. The Australian Human Rights Commission must provide a report every four years to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Australia's compliance with the Convention.

The United Nations in its Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (the Standard Rules) proposed special rules for education as they relate to students with disability to cover the provision of education in special schools where mainstream education has not quite adapted to provide an equivalent level of services offered in special schools.²⁸ Schooling for students with hearing impairments was also singled out within these rules for optional provisions in separate schools or in separate units within the mainstream. It is important to note that the drafters of the Standard Rules emphasised that compromises reflected the need to work towards systemic readiness of local schools to provide an inclusive education. Many systems have not moved beyond this point of separation.

These requirements provide a compelling context – and indeed an internationally binding legal obligation – for the Australian Government and Queensland Government when developing legislation, policy and guidelines on the standards for education of students with disability, and the expectations relating to delivery of education for these students.

2.2.3 National legislation

The **DDA** applies to all education providers. The DDA prohibits discrimination in education on the basis of disability. It was framed and ratified to protect the rights of people with disability, educate the community at large about these rights and progress Australia as an inclusive society for people with disability.

The DDA applies a broad definition of disability which would cover many students with mental illness, learning disabilities and behavioural disorders who are not currently eligible for assistance under Queensland's *Educational Adjustment Program* (described further below).

The **Commonwealth DSE** were developed to clarify the obligations of education providers under the DDA. The DSE require education providers to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability, in consultation with the students and their parents or carers, to allow them to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability, and to have opportunities and choices which are comparable with those offered to students without disability.

The requirement to make reasonable adjustments applies to: enrolment; participation in education; curriculum development and delivery; and student support services. Under the DSE, an adjustment is considered to be reasonable if it balances the interests of all parties affected, taking into account all relevant circumstances, including the student's disability, the views of the student and parents/carers, the effect of the adjustment on the student and on anyone else affected (including the education provider, staff and other students), and the cost and benefit of making the adjustment.

The DSE do not require education providers to make adjustments that are *unreasonable*. The DSE also include a defence where the necessary adjustments would cause *unjustifiable hardship* on the education provider.

The DDA and DSE prohibit direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination refers to unfavourable treatment because of a student's disability, and "indirect discrimination is

²⁸ The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Rule 6: Education, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/dissre04.htm>

where a requirement, condition or practice is applied to all students equally, but where its application is likely to have the effect of disadvantaging students with disability”.²⁹

The DSE are reviewed every five years and the last review found that, awareness and understanding varies among education providers nationally, and applying the DSE in practice is proving challenging. The 2015 review report presented 14 recommendations to improve compliance, ensure personalised support for students with disability and improve the understanding and application of the DSE. The recommendations related to improving information for education providers, students and parents about disability supports on enrolment; clarification and exemplars of reasonable adjustments, consultation, and formal assessment processes; improving complaints processes and approaches to personalised learning.

The most recent review of DSE highlighted the necessity for education departments to ensure that inclusive education embeds itself into all aspects of educational policymaking, programs and operations.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) has responsibility for resolving complaints of discrimination under federal law. These processes can be protracted, very costly in material and human terms for all involved, and involve lengthy absences from school for students with disability involved in these cases.

2.2.4 National policy initiatives

The Melbourne Declaration

The **Melbourne Declaration** (2008)³⁰ outlines a shared vision of excellence in education and binds all Australian governments to achieving the best they can, for all students, and for leading schools towards achieving better life outcomes.

That this aspiration for educational excellence includes students with disability is asserted throughout the document. More particularly, the focus is placed upon the improvement of policies, programs and teaching and assessment to assure better outcomes for all students, including students with disability.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data

Students with disability have a wide range of skills, capacities and learning needs and the extent to which disability impacts on a student’s life varies significantly. Students with the same diagnosis commonly require different levels of adjustment to participate fully in school education. There is also a cohort of students with disability who do not need tailored adjustments to participate in education on the same basis as other students. These students are supported by differentiated teaching practices that are good for all students.

The **NCCD**, referenced as part of analysis presented earlier in this section, assesses whether students are being provided with an educational adjustment – using the concept of reasonable adjustment as defined by the DDA – and subsequently determines the level of that adjustment:

- *Some students with disability may not need educational adjustments beyond those that are reasonably expected as part of quality teaching or school practices to address disability related needs. These students are counted within the classification of support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice.*
- *Additional adjustments are provided when there is an assessed need to complement the strategies and resources already available. Within adjustments, there are three categories, based on the intensity of additional support required:*

²⁹ Ibid, page 32.

³⁰ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), (2008)

- *Supplementary adjustments, when there is an assessed need at specific times*
- *Substantial adjustments to address the specific nature and significant impact of the student's disability*
- *Extensive adjustments when essential specific measures are required at all times.*

Source: Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2014)

National Disability Strategy

The **National Disability Strategy 2010-2020** provides a ten-year national policy framework for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. It represents a commitment by all levels of government, industry and the community to a unified, national approach to policy and program development. This approach aims to address the challenges faced by people with disability, both now and into the future.

The Strategy is intended to outline a way forward in *mainstream* services, including school education. Action taken under the Strategy to improve the accessibility of mainstream services for people with disability is intended to complement specialist disability services and programs currently provided by Commonwealth, state and territory governments, including those provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

More Support for Students with Disability

The More Support for Students with Disability National Partnership (MSSD) was a Commonwealth Government initiative from 2012-2015, funding teacher and principal training, equipment and technology and specialist resources for students and schools. The initiative focussed on both implementing evidence based approaches and also trying new and innovative approaches to build on the existing evidence base.

2.2.5 Queensland legislation

Education legislation

All Queensland state schools are required to adhere to the **Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (QLD) (EGPA)** to provide high-quality education that maximises students' academic potential and enables them to become effective and informed members of society. The EGPA echoes national and state legislation – and the Melbourne Declaration – that seeks to enable students with disability to access and maximise their opportunities in education as is the case for other students.

Under the EGPA, students with disability are able to enrol in any mainstream state school. However, to be eligible to enrol in support classes in mainstream schools or a state special school their disabilities must meet a certain criteria.

Anti-discrimination legislation

The **Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (QLD) (QADA)** prohibits direct or indirect discrimination in the area of education and training on the basis of *impairment*.

Direct discrimination applies when a person with an impairment is treated less favourably or worse than someone else because of their impairment. Indirect discrimination applies when a rule or a condition treats everyone the same, but the rule has an unfair effect on some people because of a particular attribute such as their impairment.

The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission (QAADC) has responsibility for resolving complaints of discrimination under federal law.

Education providers have to comply with both Commonwealth and state legislation. Students and parents may take complaints to either the HRC or QADC. Both commissions

will generally only hear complaints after they have been raised with the teacher, principal and regional office.

Disability legislation

The **Disability Services Act 2006 (QLD)** aims to acknowledge the rights of people with disability by promoting their inclusion in the life of the community in general and to ensure that disability services are safe, accountable and respond to the needs of people with disability. The legislation encourages all Queenslanders to promote inclusive principles within their own communities, and states that people with disability should have equal access to services available to other members of the Queensland community. The service delivery principles encourage service providers to consider the needs of people with disability when they design and deliver services.

In 2006, the Queensland Government commissioned a report by the Honourable WJ Carter QC, **Challenging Behaviour and Disability – A Targeted Response (the Carter Report)**. The Carter Report highlighted that restrictive practices can cause injury to a person with a disability, and are a potential violation of the person's human rights.

The Carter Report identified that disability service providers relied too heavily on restrictive practices, and that there was a growing evidence base to support the use of a positive behaviour support approach to addressing challenging behaviours.

In response to the Carter Report, the Government introduced measures under Queensland's Disability Services Act 2006 and the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 to regulate the use of certain restrictive practices in Queensland among disability service providers. Chief among these is the requirement for providers using restrictive practice to develop a positive behaviour support plan.

As part of the response to the Carter Report, the Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Support was established to lead research, development and training to improve services for people with a disability and challenging behaviours.

While the Disability Services Act, and the Carter Report, are not directly relevant to school education, the principles reflected throughout can be applied to the schooling context. Moreover, evidence gathered in reviews such as this one demonstrates the need for vigilance around compliance and teachers' knowledge with respect to building and sustaining learning environments that are conducive of positive behaviour for all students.

Other legislation

Section 280 of the Criminal Code 1899 (Qld) makes it lawful for a schoolteacher to use towards a pupil "such force as is reasonable under the circumstances" by way of correction, discipline, management or control.

This defence applies only to criminal prosecutions and has no application in civil trials. Furthermore, whether the force used in a particular case is 'reasonable' will turn on the circumstances of the particular case and be influenced by prevailing community standards.

2.2.6 Recent reviews in other Australian jurisdictions

Senate Inquiry into abuse and neglect of people with disability

In February 2015, the Senate directed the Senate Community Affairs References Committee to investigate and report on violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings (the Senate Inquiry into abuse and neglect).

Beyond exposure, the Committee investigated the causes of abuse, outcomes from reports of abuse, actions to eliminate the instances of abuse and the mechanisms that would support systematic change. 30 recommendations came out of the Inquiry.

The Inquiry is significant to this review because of the scale of abuse which was uncovered. Of particular note are recommendations relating to the use of restrictive practice in schools, as well as the recommendations relating to school policy:

- Recommendation 19 was that Australian governments implement a zero-tolerance approach to restrictive practice in a schools context, specifically noting that planned restrictive practice be eliminated from individual plans, reporting requirements be put in place around the use of emergency restrictive practice, support be provided in implementing restrictive practice reduction policy, and compulsory training be given to teachers on policy relating to use of restrictive practice.
- Recommendation 23 was that Australian governments work to establish a national program to address bullying of students with disability, ensure that schools are adequately funded to provide for the needs of students with disability and that schools spend this funding on those students, improve access to transport, strengthen national requirements relating to exclusion of students with disability from school activities, and ensure that all disability oversight systems must include schools.

The Inquiry and its findings further underscores that schools should be sites for disability awareness raising and for cultural reform that reaches into the practice and not just the rhetoric of inclusion. The Inquiry affirms the stance of the Department to review the use of restraint across Queensland schools.

Expert Panel on Students with Complex and Challenging Behaviours (The Shaddock Review)

An expert panel was formed to review policy and practice in ACT schools in 2015, with a focus on students with complex needs and challenging behaviours, led by Anthony Shaddock, Emeritus Professor at the University of Canberra. Over 1700 individuals and organisations contributed to this review through submissions, interviews and consultations.

Approximately 50 recommendations came out of the review, which covered a range of contexts including law, policy, school culture and relationships, settings and placements, physical environment and infrastructure, student behaviour support, targeted services and supports, student and staff safety, agency collaboration, professional learning, funding and leadership and system improvements. The ACT Government agreed to all of the review recommendations.

Review of Program for Students with Disability (Victoria)

The review of the Program for Students with Disability (PSD Review) (2015) investigated the current system and what improvements could be made to maximise the learning potential of students with disability. The review targeted the funding and resourcing models that support students with disability in Victorian schools.

As a result of extensive research and 24 consultations, the review identified a number of limitations with the current structure and proposed 25 recommendations.

This sub-section (*Section 2.2*) has sought to highlight the **legislative and policy context for students with disability**. There is a range of binding international obligations and legislative requirements that create a legal imperative for education providers to deliver the best possible education for students with disability, and seek to deliver this education within an inclusive environment. Improved outcomes for students with disability is not all that matters – it is how the outcome is achieved.

Ultimately, Section 2 has aimed to establish that inclusive education is everyone's business, and inclusive education for every student is both an educational means and goal. The next section (*Section 3*) establishes the **framework for this review** of education of students with disability in Queensland state schools, referencing these legislative underpinnings as appropriate. It describes the features of a high performing school system, which provide a benchmark against which the Queensland state schooling sector can be assessed.

3 Review framework



While the review scope outlined in Section 1.2 determines the chief areas of focus for this review, a practical assessment of these issues requires a point of reference against which the current system and the outcomes it generates can be evaluated. That is, there is a need to ensure that this review – and the findings and recommendations it gives rise to – is grounded in structure and is referenced against the features and characteristics that describe a system that supports students with disability achieving to their maximum potential. The framework hereby serves to ensure this review is both comprehensive and coherent and that its findings are reached in a systematic and transparent fashion.

Accordingly, this section sets out the review framework. It describes the features of a high performing school system as they relate to students with disability and then outlines – at a more detailed level – the elements of the policy environment, practice environment and resourcing model within such a system.

3.1 Features of a high performing school system

Like all areas of social policy, there are aspects of education of students with disability where a definitive view regarding leading practice is yet to emerge. However, in the majority of cases, the prevailing evidence – including experiences from international jurisdictions – provides a basis for identifying the *features of education systems* that support students with disability engaging with education in a way that maximises the outcomes they achieve.

These features are in many cases not unique to the education of students with disability – they equally characterise high performing education systems generally. These features in turn provide a point of reference for assessing the current policy, practice and resourcing environment in the Queensland state schooling sector and, by extension, to identifying those areas where improvement could be made to bring the system more closely into alignment with leading international standards.

These features have in turn been mapped to policy and practice areas and, on this basis, to the relevant elements of this section of the report (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Features of a schooling system that support students with disability

Features	Section
<i>In relation to the policy environment:</i>	
Legislative obligations are enshrined in all aspects of policy and practice such that they are universally understood and adhered to by those participating in the education system.	3.2.1
Expectations with regard to student outcomes – and the preconditions for their achievement – are clearly established and serve as the basis for system-wide accountability and performance monitoring.	3.2.2, 3.2.8
The efficacy of policy and practice is continually evaluated and refined based on verifiable contemporary evidence.	3.2.3, 3.2.4

Parents and carers can exercise reasonable levels of choice regarding their child's education and have access to information required to effectively inform this choice. Parents and carers have access to affordable, accessible, effective mechanisms for raising concerns or complaints regarding their child's experience with the education system. 3.2.5

Parents and carers are actively engaged in their children's education so that the school and home environment can jointly reinforce students' learning. 3.2.6

The system's governance and leadership is geared toward driving positive change and installing a system-wide culture aligned with the established objectives and expectations. 3.2.7

In relation to the practice environment:

Teachers are knowledgeable about and skilled in the contemporary practices proven as effective in educating a classroom with diverse needs, including those needs classified as disability, via exposure and access to:

- high calibre, contemporary pre-service training 3.3.1 - 3.3.5
- evidence-based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs
- real-time support and guidance, such that challenging classroom situations can be appropriately and effectively managed
- constructive professional collaboration.

School leaders understand their legislative and policy obligations, are effective at relating these obligations to their teaching staff, and draw on available resources and information in driving practice for students with disability. 3.3.4

Schools effectively use student data and information to monitor and support student achievement. Transition between education settings is aided by systematic, timely, universal information exchange. 3.3.5, 3.3.6

Schools' physical characteristics support and encourage inclusion and differentiation. 3.3.7

In relation to the resourcing model:

Resource allocations balance the need to recognise differential educational need with the costs of accurately determining this in a way that reinforces the system's broader objectives. 3.4

In order to inform the development of this framework, this review has surveyed the Australian and international literature and evidence from previous reviews of disability policy, examined evidence from overseas jurisdictions and spoken with a range of experts in the field of disability, education and anti-discrimination policy. While conjecture remains about some aspects of a highly effective system, what follows is a well-established set of overarching characteristics which describe a schooling system that gives every student the opportunity to achieve to the maximum of their potential. Together, these elements form the review framework.

3.2 Policy environment

This review has considered the policy environment as those elements which exist at the system level, and which determine the operating environment within which schools deliver educational programmes and services.

Following the 1984 Collins review, *Integration in Victorian Education*, Gillian Fulcher who was the principal author of the report, wrote an important text entitled *Disabling*

*Policies.*³¹ Fulcher observes that policy is made at all levels. In other words, people throughout an education system will read, interpret and apply policy and in so doing remake policy. This explains variations in policy applications across a system and places added pressure on policy writers and senior education leaders to develop policy strategically with system wide controls to ensure coherence and consistency of purpose and achievement.

The aim for policy developers then is to ensure that there is clarity in policy statements, that there is strong leadership and intellectual authority demonstrated at all levels throughout the system, and that responsibility for improving outcomes is distributed to maintain fidelity to the goals and mandate for action which have been established.

3.2.1 Legislative and policy awareness

Legislative obligations work in concert with community expectations to lead the case for improvement in educational practices and outcomes for students with disability. For these obligations to have greatest impact, they must be enshrined in all aspects of policy and practice, and widely and clearly communicated, so that they are universally understood and adhered to by all those participating in the education system.

School leaders should be fully aware of relevant legislation and policy, notably the DDA, DSE and QADA, the National Disability Strategy and the Melbourne Declaration, and should be able to developing plans for their school demonstrating how to interpret and apply those responsibilities. Recent reviews of the DSE, released in 2012 and 2016, have highlighted that this is not the case nationally and that lack of awareness of the Disability Standards (2005) remains across schools and is perceived as a significant barrier for students with disability in accessing, and participating and succeeding in education.³²

Complying with complex legislation across multiple areas is a challenge for school leaders and staff. As noted in the Shaddock Review of state schools in the Australian Capital Territory:

*"The legislative framework for teaching and supporting students with complex needs and challenging behaviours is multilayered, and schools are subject to competing obligations (for example, to avoid unlawful discrimination against a student with a disability who displays violent behaviours, while also ensuring work safety for staff). It is vital that these obligations are translated into explicit, readily accessible policies, procedures and guidelines, to enable schools and staff to understand and comply with these legal requirements, and to reconcile these duties."*³³

Academics and disability advocates have noted that raising awareness of the DSE and DDA with principals and teachers can be useful, but should be accompanied by broader education relating to disability awareness, including provision of practical tools, provision of additional training, allocation of teacher time and resources towards providing adjustments, and an improved school culture.

Without concurrent provision of practical guidance systematic Professional Development (PD) and resources, there is a risk that increasing the pressure on principals and teachers to comply with relevant disability legislation adds more to the weight of conflicting accountabilities which principals and teachers are currently subject to – rather than being a positive support in improving inclusion and outcomes for students with disability.

³¹ Fulcher, (1999)

³² Commonwealth of Australia, (2016)

³³ Shaddock et al (2015)

3.2.2 Expectations relating to education delivery

Binding international agreements and conventions, and national and state legislation, affirm the right of children with disability to an education in their neighbourhood school on an equal basis as their peers (see Section 2.2.2). The DDA and the DSE provide the legal framework to safeguard this right and to progressively work towards building a more **inclusive education system** for all students, including students with disability. Expectations with regard to student outcomes – and the preconditions for their achievement – need to be clearly established, and serve as the basis for system-wide accountability and performance monitoring.

Building an inclusive education system requires structural and cultural changes that reach across and into all aspects of the system's policies, programs, practices and structures. Accordingly, the overarching policy framework and the objectives it establishes, and leadership which drive the achievement of these, are essential prerequisites to effecting change and driving system improvement.

Inclusive education is not the redeployment of special education to regular schools with accompanying adjustments to its lexicon. UNICEF provides guidance to distinguish between special education and inclusive education:

*"There have, traditionally, been three broad approaches to the education of children with disabilities: **segregation**, in which children are classified according to their impairment and allocated a school designed to respond to that particular impairment; **integration**, where children with disabilities are placed in the mainstream system, often in special classes, as long as they can accommodate its demands and fit in with its environment; and **inclusion**, where there is recognition of a need to transform the cultures, policies and practices in schools to accommodate the differing needs of individual students, and an obligation to remove the barriers that impede that possibility.*

It has been argued that inclusive education is not only about addressing issues of input, such as access, and those related to processes, such as teacher training, but also involves a shift in underlying values and beliefs held across the system. It requires that all children, including children with disabilities, not only have access to schooling within their own communities, but that they are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to achieve their full potential."³⁴

It should be noted the term inclusion often lacks a strict conceptual focus and definition, as highlighted in work by Forlin and others. This may contribute to some misconceptions and confused practice.³⁵ It is therefore essential for the system to clearly articulate what it means by inclusive education, including its expectations for student outcomes and preconditions for their achievement.

The Melbourne Declaration states that all young Australians must become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. School education is ultimately geared towards ensuring all students can leave school equipped to lead the lives they want to lead. The goals of the school education system should be the goals we want to achieve in society. It implies that these goals cannot be constrained by historic views on what students with disability are capable of achieving.

The benefits of an inclusive education are well established within research.³⁶ This includes the improvement of teaching and learning for all students; improved transitions through the stages of schooling to further education and work; greater levels of educational engagement and achievement; and expanded opportunities for all students including

³⁴ UNICEF, (2012), p.10

³⁵ Forlin et al, (2013), p.6

³⁶ Mittler, (2012)

students with disability.³⁷ These benefits should be communicated to all, with governments taking these benefits into account when developing policy and prioritising expenditure.

Against this legal, academic and societal backing, the first task for a high performing system in this domain is the statement of expectations, including a clear vision of inclusive education, and strong and distributed leadership. With these conditions in place, the necessary reforms – and the necessary positive change that must accompany this – can be undertaken.

3.2.3 Performance measurement and monitoring

Within a schooling system architecture where all aspects of the system's design work in harmony to drive achievement of its objectives, performance frameworks have a vital role to play. Like many aspects of the features set out here, the effective application of performance frameworks to drive the achievement of system objectives in the context of students with disability builds heavily on the principles that apply to schooling systems generally. Effective performance frameworks for schools:

- Establish a set of clear and meaningful metrics of performance for the system
- Outline how the performance of schools is expected to contribute towards these outcomes
- Provide an evidence base to guide schools' strategic investments to drive improved performance (across different contexts)
- Monitor and continuously evaluate progress against performance targets
- Apportion and enforce appropriate accountability towards improved performance to leaders within the schooling system.

The need to tailor general approaches to performance monitoring and management only arises to the extent that the relevant indicators for students with disability diverge from those relevant to every student. In some cases, this need may be a purely temporary one (for example, during a period of transition or implementation).

Direct measures of student engagement, wellbeing and achievement, and the collection and analysis of data, are essential to all school improvement efforts. Wellbeing measures of safety, relationships and support have been shown to be the best indicators of outcomes for all students. Under achievement, high performing schooling systems would typically consider attainment (for example, school completion), learning gain, learning performance, and transition. Engagement measures ideally capture attendance, retention (within one school) and measures (via student surveys) of connectedness to a school. Of additional relevance to measurement and monitoring as it relates to inclusive education is participation of students with disability in age-appropriate achievement and assessment standards.

Within this framework, effective schooling systems should continually examine the relationship between cohort characteristics, including students with disability, and each of these measures. Over time the system should be striving for cohort characteristics to become less of a predictor of achievement, engagement and wellbeing.

The data must be collected and/or aggregated at different levels to inform all levels of accountability. Ultimately, a good framework should involve a line of sight from the system level (including from the Parliament) down to the level of the school (or indeed the classroom).

³⁷ Morton, and McMenamin, (2011), Black-Hawkins, (2014), Black-Hawkins and Florian, (2012)

In the case of students with disability, this means comprehensive and explicit measures of inclusion, and outcomes for students with disability, must be as equally present as those that apply to broader system and educational objectives.

This can mean developing approaches specific to assessment for students with disability. The New Zealand Ministry of Education commissioned Professor Missy Morton and her colleagues to develop assessment narratives for students with disability.³⁸ In this way teachers, parents and carers may track, with authenticity, a student's *learning story*.

School improvement plans and reviews should be shared openly – the ACER National School Improvement Tool (NSIT), for example, is designed so that schools must share their plan for curriculum delivery with parents and carers, families and the wider community to be responsive to local needs and have effective, systemic curriculum delivery.³⁹

The case for a tailored approach to students with disability

Conflicting views are expressed by stakeholders concerning the need to adopt a unique approach to school performance for students with disability.

In one regard, a focus on disaggregated *groups* is considered antithetical to a whole school approach which focuses on the learning needs of all students. At the school level, analysis and tracking of *every student* is critical to enabling a whole school approach. Work to measure the spread of outcomes of students across schools and systems is constantly under development.

However, performance measurement can be enhanced through disaggregation of performance for groups. Examples of Australian and international models for performance measurement within schools highlight the need to disaggregate outcomes by identified groups:

- The Report on Government Services (RoGS) performance indicator framework – which the Department has referred to as its performance measurement model – outlines the need to identify the gap in performance between identified groups.
- *The Every Student Succeeds Act 2015* (US) (ESSA) requires states to transition to disaggregation of assessment results by student subgroups, including students with disability. See Appendix C for further information on ESSA.
- The NSIT highlights analysis of outcomes by disaggregated groups to be essential in analysing performance at the school level.
- The Grattan Institute's recent *Widening Gaps* report disaggregates outcomes for students whose parents have high and low education backgrounds.

In order to better understand how schooling practice is working to raise the outcomes of all students, schools should explore and adopt both whole school measures, and measures which have been specifically disaggregated by interest groups, including for students with disability.

The sector can take steps to better understand the extent to which whole school support is taking place, through direct measurement of inclusive practice, which is the focus of the next subsection.

Measuring inclusion

With the statement of expectations in place regarding delivery of education for all students, input, process and outcome measures can be defined against this, as both a means of measuring status and progress in delivery, and continually refining the expectations around education delivery.

³⁸ New Zealand Ministry for Education, (2009)

³⁹ ACER, (2012)

Direct measurement of inclusion at the school level has been highlighted as an area which will shed light on a school's ability to provide an environment conducive to education for students with disability.⁴⁰ While student outcomes are the ultimate objective that the system is striving to achieve, effectively generating the best outcomes for students in a system requiring material levels of change will often require reliance on intermediate measures and mechanisms.

To be regarded as inclusive, schools must be ready to accept students with diverse needs, as well as to behave in proactive ways to eliminate barriers to enable full participation and achievement.

Measures of inclusion can be thought of as contributing to school performance for students with disability in three ways:

1. As leading indicators of inclusive practice for schools, which is likely to lead to improved outcomes over the longer term.
2. As a means for the system to identify areas of concern for schools, and subsequently allocate specialised resources towards them.
3. As a means for the system to measure performance as it relates to inclusion at schools, and subsequently hold itself and its schools accountable for improvement.

Mechanisms (1) and (2) require system-wide implementation of a measure of inclusion within schools; (3) could be introduced through sampling of schools.

A variety of measures of inclusion have been developed. Booth and Ainscow's (2002) Index for Inclusion (Revised 2011)⁴¹ was developed in the UK and validated for use in a small number of Western Australian schools in 2001. The Index as it became known was also adapted for and used in primary and secondary schools across Queensland as an initiative of the Staff College for Inclusive Education. In 2010, the Education Review Office (ERO) in New Zealand developed a set of indicators to review inclusive practices in schools. ERO reviews a random sample of schools every two years to 2014 against these indicators, and publishes the results online.⁴²

The benefits of measuring inclusion must be weighed up in regard to the costs. Measuring inclusion at the school level takes considerable time and requires training for staff to ensure the relevant instrument is utilised in a consistent manner across schools. While examples of inclusive education indicators were sourced, this review could not find any studies which estimate the benefit of measuring inclusive education at the school level. This is an area which could be considered for further investigation.

3.2.4 Monitoring and evaluation

The previous section discussed how the performance of schools, on a day-to-day basis, is measured, monitored and continually improved. This section discusses the monitoring and evaluation of policy at a broader system level – and how this allows for fine-tuning of policy and program settings over time. The efficacy of policy and practice is continually evaluated and refined based on verifiable contemporary evidence.

While education is predominantly delivered at the school level, the sector has a role in developing and delivering programs at the system level which have an evidentiary backing. These centrally allocated programs are a critical component of many areas of school education, where scale or other inhibiting factors limit the potential to be introduced by individual schools. Such centrally allocated programs should be introduced

⁴⁰ Forlin et al (2013), p.10

⁴¹ Booth and Ainscow (2002)

⁴² New Zealand Education review Office (2012). These statistics have not been published for 2014 as of yet.

with a monitoring and evaluation framework in place, to establish their effectiveness and enable iterative improvements in policy on an ongoing basis.

Policies for all groups – and across a range of policy areas – are often introduced with vigour and conviction. Implementation can wane when the initial focus and enthusiasm associated with a program recedes.

A culture of continuous evaluation helps to enable those introducing innovative practice to hold the course and achieve fidelity in the implementation of these practices. Ongoing evaluation involves consideration, and measurement, of *indicators* of success – often integrated into a program logic model.

A monitoring and evaluation framework built around any new program is essential in ensuring that the program is implemented in line with this logic – and that the implementation can be traced at every stage.

One example of leading practice in this regard is demonstrated by the NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), outlined below.

Case study 3-1: NSW CESE

In order for evaluation and analysis to have the greatest effect, research and evaluations should be made public. The New South Wales CESE demonstrates various effective practices in terms of data collection and analysis.

CESE was created with the aim to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of education in New South Wales. CESE analyses and evaluates educational programs and strategies. It gauges NSW's education performance over time through its ongoing core data collections, and delivery of analysis and reports.

More specifically, CESE's three main responsibilities are to i) provide data analysis, information and evaluation that improve effectiveness, efficiency and accountability; ii) provide a single access point to education data that has appropriate safeguards to protect data confidentiality and integrity; and iii) build capacity across the whole education sector by providing accessible reports so that everyone can make better use of data.

In the absence of evaluation, good policies are rarely given the opportunity to prove themselves as effective, and poor policies are rarely given the opportunity to prove themselves as ineffective, to the frustration of schools and policymakers alike.

In the particular area of students with disability, this has tended to discourage systems from enabling progress in this respect. This has most likely been to the detriment of performance, and cannot continue to be a barrier to improvement.

3.2.5 Parental choice about enrolment

Consistent with the legislative framework outlined earlier, it is a widely held view among academics, advocates and community groups alike that the default setting of education for students with disability should be in regular schools, and that a system should strive towards universal delivery in this mode of education. As outlined in Section 2.2, domestic and international policy encourages education providers to not just deliver the best possible education for students with disability, but to do this within inclusive settings.

A key component of this principle is that parents and carers can exercise reasonable levels of choice regarding their child's education, and have access to information required to effectively inform this choice.

Policy relating to enrolment within different school settings should be aligned with the goals and expectations of inclusive education policy. Over the long term, policy should be orientated toward what the educational community sees as the schooling environment most conducive to every student achieving to the maximum of their ability – which current the legislative and evidentiary context show to be mainstream settings.

Enrolment policy, and resourcing decisions for students with disability in regular and mainstream schools, should be made with consideration of the benefits (as expressed in long term educational and wellbeing outcomes) as well as the costs (including the impost of educational choices on the families and the cost to the system of providing school education).

However, enrolment policy must be pragmatic in balancing the pursuit of what is an increasingly accepted preferred model against the systems that today's policymakers and sector leaders have inherited. That is, existing features must be considered when refining sector-wide enrolment policy:

1. Significant investments in human and physical capital have been made into special schools.
2. This mode of delivery may presently be more efficient where expensive, specialist resources are required - and there are benefits to co-locating students with similar needs.
3. Positive outcomes from mainstream enrolment are contingent on the capability of the sector to deliver leading contemporary practice to all students in mainstream settings.
4. The system should be one which supports and allows parents to make informed decisions for their child which are in their best interests (educationally). As such, full information about the effectiveness and appropriateness of different settings should be provided to parents and carers and students. Every school should be welcoming, and in particular, school staff should be fully supportive of the rights of all students to enrol in their chosen school.
5. There are special cases where parents may be influenced beyond educational interests. For example, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community has developed a shared language and cultural identity, and parents may wish for their children to connect with that identity within a sign language environment.

With these elements in mind, a shift towards more mainstream school settings must be carefully planned and executed over time – and be made subject to iterative improvements in inclusive practice across schools.

3.2.6 Parent and carer involvement

It is well established that parents and carers play a pivotal role in the educational outcomes of their child. A leading schooling system would be characterised through the following form of parent and carer involvement:

- Parents and carers are actively engaged in their children's education such that the school and home environment can jointly reinforce students' learning.⁴³
- Parents and carers explicitly know what their rights are under the DDA, and understand the concepts of "on the same basis" and "reasonable adjustment".
- Parents and carers have access to affordable, accessible, effective mechanisms for raising concerns or complaints regarding their child's experience with the education system.

⁴³ Shaddock et al, (2015)

- Further, they will know and be able to seek recourse in instances where their child's rights are not being upheld under the relevant legislation.
- Parents and carers are confident and able to advocate for their children's education across multiple levels within the education system.

The National School Improvement Tool acknowledges the importance of parental involvement and states that school data gathering should include input from both students and parents and carers. In return, schools should provide information about where students are in their learning, what progress they have made over time, and what they might do to support their children's further learning. Further, in relation to curriculum delivery:

- Schools should share their plan for curriculum delivery with parents and carers, families and the wider community.
- Teachers should consult with parents and carers and with students themselves to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to meet the needs of students with disability, including through the development of individual learning plans.⁴⁴

Parental advocacy

Education for students with disability, as outlined in Section 2, is governed by a combination of Australian and international binding agreements on a standard acceptable set of outcomes and actions for this group of students. In order to effectively link these legislative requirements with accountability, mechanisms must be in place which enable students with disability and their families to raise complaints about specific areas where they feel the education provider has acted contrary to those agreements.

Parents need access to a set of effective formal and informal mechanisms in order to better advocate for their children's school education.

- Informal mechanisms can link parents with the skills and resources they need to constructively negotiate elements relating to their child's education with their teachers and school leader.
- Formal mechanisms allow parents to pursue complaints against the school in line with established legislative procedures. Guides to complaints mechanisms consistently advocate for the development of a service that includes the following features:^{45,46}
 - Responsive and timely: Complaints should be dealt with in established and reasonable timeframes.
 - Objective and confidential: A complaint should be treated on its merits, with an open mind and without prejudice arising from any previous contact between complainant and the agency.
 - Accessible: Accessibility features both effective access options and public awareness of the system.
 - Can provide a remedy: Mechanisms should exist for enabling appropriate remedies to be provided when complaints are upheld.
 - Clear and efficient process: Complaints should be handled in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the matter being complained about using a clear and logical process.
 - Accountable and subject to continuous improvement: A complaints system should be open to scrutiny by clients, the responsible Minister, agency staff or other relevant reviewing bodies with appropriate oversight.
 - There are opportunities for mediation and informal resolution throughout the process.

Across Australia, there are limited personal advocacy services available. The National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) provides people with disability with access to

⁴⁴ ACER, (2012)

⁴⁵ Council of Standards Australia, (2006)

⁴⁶ Commonwealth Ombudsman, (2009)

advocacy. Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is a peak representative organisation that supports inclusive education reform.

Inclusion Alberta is an example of an organisation which combines policy research, systemic advocacy and personal advocacy, and provides training, school-level consultation, and advocates government regarding inclusive education practice. Inclusion Alberta also provide advocacy resources to students throughout all stages of the complaints process.

Progression of a complaint beyond the standard reporting mechanisms to the HRC, QADC and their associated courts and tribunals, are costly and potentially detrimental to the education of the student. For this reason, the system should strive for informal resolution of issues, ideally at the school level. In thoroughly monitoring complaints, analysing the issues which arise across the system, and reflecting on this data in determining policy and guidance for schools and parents, the central and regional offices can play a part in limiting the need for legislative enforcement.

The general body of parents and citizen representatives cannot in and of itself provide the continuing advocacy required for students with disability. It is important to establish formal and informal communications between disability organisations, and not just diagnostic groups and special education groups, and the Department.

3.2.7 System governance and leadership

A high performing school system should be able to drive sufficient support for students with disability and reinforce the message that inclusive education is everyone's business. The system's governance and leadership should be geared toward driving positive change and installing a system-wide culture aligned with the established objectives.

Department structure

An effective improvement agenda for students with disability is no different than that for school improvement in general. Improvement will result from increased attention across all areas of schooling. Ultimately, there should be a whole-of-government, or whole-of-department, shared responsibility of students with disability – where everyone within the Department feels it is *their* business.

However, at least in the short run, an explicit responsibility for pursuing inclusion is necessary to coordinate the efforts of a schooling system across this range of areas.

Under a leading governance structure, responsibility for coordinating the efforts of a schooling system to build upon its existing efforts in inclusive education would be afforded a sufficient level of seniority and policy influence in terms of senior oversight, combined with accountability for achieving progress in the area. The Senior Executive of the Department of Education and Training should continue to show and communicate strong leadership in inclusive education across the whole portfolio.

The form which this explicit responsibility takes – for example, whether it is subsumed into an existing role, or is implemented through development of a new role with overt responsibility for inclusion – is a decision for the Department.

Importantly, there should be coherence between strategy and operations. These factors are required to ensure that a vision for students with disability can translate to action.⁴⁷

Ultimately, those responsible within a schooling system for driving improved practice need to have the appropriate authority to do so. Efforts to improve outcomes for students with

⁴⁷ Parting Reflections: Secretary's Speech to the IPAA, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Peter N Varghese AO.

disability encounter resistance from a range of individuals, for various reasons. For example:

- Implementing inclusive pedagogy may involve disrupting practices which have been in place for many years.
- Authentic inclusion students with disability in mainstream classrooms may involve disruption to the learning of other students, in the short term.

An agenda to improve outcomes for students with disability should be conscious of these factors but not dissuaded by them, and those responsible for pursuing this agenda should be confident that they have access to the correct resources and the authority to pursue this.

Engagement with stakeholders

Transparency and engagement with stakeholders, including people with disability and their advocacy groups, plays a key role in ensuring that policies are informed by a diverse range of voices. These stakeholder groups should cover voices from a range of areas – parental advocacy, disability-specific advocacy groups (including groups advocating for deaf and hard-of-hearing, students with specific language impairments, students with autism, and groups specifically raising awareness in relation to subgroups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students in out-of-home care).

Implementing this engagement strategy within the system is contingent on the existence of strong stakeholder voices. Policy development and implementation will be strengthened by a high performing sector of advocates.

Cross-agency linkages

There are numerous benefits from collaborating across agencies to craft and implement policy for students. This is particularly relevant for students who have complex and challenging needs. For these students, case management facilitated across multiple areas of government may be the most effective form of intervention.

Cross-agency linkages incorporate different perspectives and can lead to a more holistic view of policy to support vulnerable students. Further, with the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Queensland, collaboration is essential to best capitalise on the supports available to students through different agencies and funding sources.

School leadership

The recent wave of school resource allocation reform across Australia has significantly devolved powers of decision-making within the education system. This has occurred due to the understanding that schools are best placed to make resourcing decisions for their unique local context. Effective implementation of school level autonomy is dependent on capable school leadership. In the Review of Funding for Schooling, it is noted that school leaders need to be adequately informed about best practices that are most relevant to their school context.⁴⁸

School leaders are also responsible for communicating the intention of policy to the teachers at their school, managing their school's improvement strategy and ultimately leading the delivery of practice within the classroom.

This is particularly relevant to the education of students with disability, a critical area where culture and attitude must be led from the top, a diverse range of pedagogical practices from literature must be sourced and introduced to cater for a wide range of

⁴⁸ Gonski, D., (2011)

abilities, and where the policy and legislative environment is wide-ranging with often conflicting priorities.

Effective implementation of school level autonomy is dependent on capable school leaders, who can navigate the policy environment and utilise the tools and resources provided by the system to improve school outcomes.

It has been identified that school leadership is the starting point for the transformation of low performing disadvantaged schools (OECD 2012) and that principal effectiveness can be linked to improved academic achievement, particularly for younger students – reflecting the important role of school leaders in contributing to improved educational outcomes (Cobb-Clark and Jha 2013).

The MSSD initiative also identified that strong leadership is critical in developing an inclusive schooling ethos and, as such, 'Building leadership capacity' was one of the major themes and areas of emphasis. In this respect there are many lessons to be drawn from Bill Henderson, a school principal from Boston whose book is entitled *The Blind Advantage: How Going Blind Made Me a Stronger Principal and How Including Children with Disabilities Made Our School Better for Everyone*.⁴⁹

3.2.8 Culture

Culture forms and drives, and is formed and driven by, the aggregated behaviours of an organisation. Culture permeates the broader education community. While every level of the organisation – the central State Schools division, the regional offices, and each individual school – will have its idiosyncratic culture, the system must form and sustain the collective culture of the whole organisation. The senior leadership of the Department coordinates portfolio-wide adherence to the collective culture of inclusion and excellence.

Legislation plays an important role in establishing accountability and driving improvement in practice. However, as noted by the Queensland advocate in response to the review of Restrictive Practices in 2006:

"Legislation is a blunt instrument for achieving the type of cultural change that is required to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people with impaired decision-making capacity...true cultural shift will only be achieved when service providers understand and uphold in practice a rights-based approach to the way in which they support clients".⁵⁰

There are various models of organisational culture that exist and are employed by professionals. Behaviours of senior leaders, systems of accountability, and symbols of recognition, which exist throughout an organisation, ultimately shape its values and beliefs. While this report will not outline an explicit model for modifying organisational culture, it will outline the principles that culture should reflect, and a roadmap for achieving that.

Anecdotal evidence presented to the Senate Inquiry, *Access to real learning*, was that *"the biggest difference between students (with disability) having strong educational attainment and outcomes and not is the culture of the school they attend"*⁵¹.

Culture within an organisation and across a system can be assessed and changed – while this takes time and investment, steps can be made to constructively support progress.⁵² Culture is a complex concept that serves both as an input – in that it drives the

⁴⁹ Henderson, (2011)

⁵⁰ Office of the Public Advocate (Queensland) - Response to Discussion Paper: review of the Regulation of Restrictive Practices in the Disability Services Act 2006 and the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000.

⁵¹ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016), p.20

⁵² Deloitte, (2016)

behaviours of an organisation – and an outcome, in that it is ultimately a reflection of those behaviours. It was noted in discussions with an education consultant approached through this review, and confirmed in change management literature, that an active drive for culture change would focus on updating awareness and language, and the literature relating to culture change highlighted the critical importance of this being driven from the top.

This same research has highlighted that a centrally coordinated and communicated vision relating to inclusion is a necessary component to create a drive for action.⁵³

Nomenclature

Language drives attitudes and behaviours in both obvious and subtle ways. Language shapes the way we view the world and the way we re-create it. The words we use influence community attitudes - both positively and negatively - and impact on the lives of others.

The term *special* has longstanding negative social connotations with regard to people with disability, and the continuing use of the term special within schooling is used to describe segregated education settings.

People with Disability Australia advocate for language to reflect the social model of disability.

"According to the medical model of disability, 'disability' is a health condition dealt with by medical professionals. People with disability are thought to be different to what is normal. From this context, disability is seen to be a problem of the individual. From the medical model, a person with disability is in need of being fixed or cured. From this point of view, disability is a tragedy and people with disability are to be pitied. The medical model of disability is all about what a person cannot do and cannot be.

The social model sees disability as the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers. It therefore carries the implication that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairments to participate in society on an equal basis with others."⁵⁴

Preferred language should reflect this view of disability through the lens of the social model of disability. The use of person first language, avoidance of acronyms such as *SWD* (when describing people), and the use of the term *person without disability* when describing the peers of students with disability, are critical in promoting a positive culture and attitude for students with disability.

Bullying

Students with disability experience bullying at a significantly higher rate than their peers. Bullying can lead to negative physical and mental health outcomes for students and create a reluctance to attend school, and ultimately result in poorer engagement, wellbeing and academic achievement outcomes.

Access to real learning found that bullying of students with disability happened at a much higher rate than students without and recommended establishing a national approach to ending the bullying of students with disability. At a national level the National Safe Schools Framework provides Australian schools with a vision and set of guiding principles that assist school communities to develop positive and practical student safety and

⁵³ Salisbury and Macgregor (2005)

⁵⁴ Terminology used by PWDA (Online resource)

wellbeing policies. *Access to real learning* recommended that data on bullying be collected and published within monitoring frameworks at the state level.⁵⁵

Schools are specifically required to address harassment and bullying of students with disability under legislative obligations.⁵⁶ Under an effective school policy framework schools are aided by the sector in addressing these moral and legislative obligations and promoting respectful relationships between all students at their schools.

3.3 Practice environment

There is a significant body of literature highlighting what constitutes leading contemporary practice for students with disability, particularly in terms of pedagogical practice and classroom management. This section highlights practice for students which will ultimately facilitate the incorporation of **all students** in an inclusive learning environment.

Similar to measuring performance, the review team has encountered conflicting stakeholder views around the need to adopt a unique approach to education for students with disability – or whether to adopt a whole school approach. In the 2009 review of Special Education in the ACT, it was argued that:

"Government and education policy in the ACT supports inclusive practice, and in this context, the report urges schools and school systems to work simultaneously towards two related objectives: a) to provide the adjustments that many students with a disability need in order to participate in education on the same basis as other students; and b) to adapt mainstream practices so that adjustments for individual students (whether they have a disability or not) become less necessary."⁵⁷

3.3.1 Curriculum and pedagogy

It is widely accepted that the goals of curriculum and pedagogy in inclusive education should be about ensuring, as far as possible, that *all students* can participate in the same learning.

A key factor in determining success in teaching for students with a range of abilities is the teacher's ability to tailor their delivery to every child in the classroom. This point was acknowledged in the Senate Inquiry, *Access to real learning*, which recommended that teachers, principals and support staff are supported to develop inclusive education skills in areas such as UDL, differentiated teaching and cooperative learning⁵⁸.

UDL refers to a scientifically valid framework developed at Harvard University for guiding educational practice. UDL is concerned with "...the conscious and deliberate creation of lessons and outcomes that allow all students access to and participation in the same curricula"⁵⁹ and provides "accessible, flexible, usable and customisable curriculum for all students"⁶⁰, which can be used in combination with instructional differentiation.⁶¹ Therefore, instead of taking a curriculum designed with the 'middle child' in mind and adapting it to other students, a curriculum is created for all students at the design stage. UDL has strong support both in literature and in real world examples as a practice that

⁵⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016), p.20

⁵⁶ The DSE require education providers to develop and implement strategies and programs to prevent harassment or victimisation of a student with a disability, and unjustifiable hardship is not a defence to failing to meet this standard.

⁵⁷ Shaddock and Giorcelli, (2009)

⁵⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016)

⁵⁹ van Kraayenoord, C. E., (2007). p392

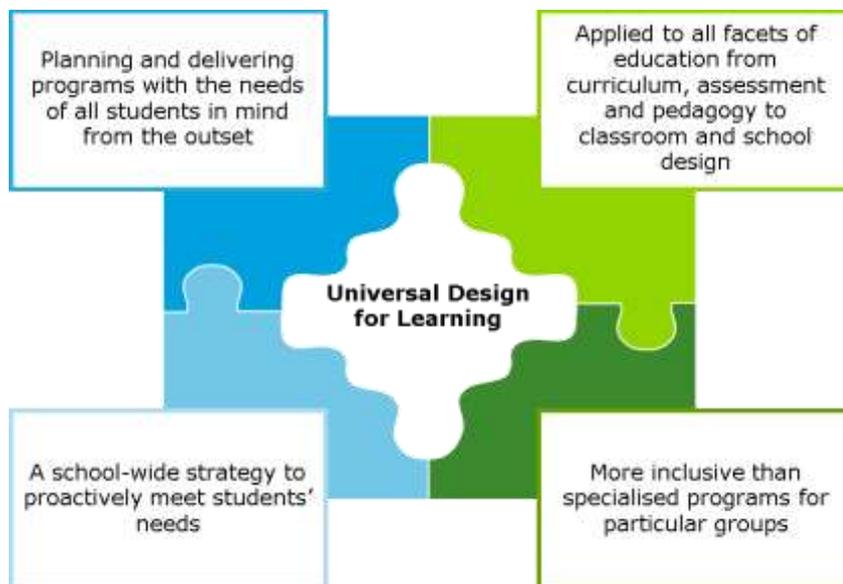
⁶⁰ van Kraayenoord, (2007)

⁶¹ Forlin et al, (2013)

can drive improvements in inclusive education⁶². **Error! Reference source not found.** below highlights these components of UDL and how they work to support classroom delivery.

Response to intervention (RTI) provides a tiered approach to the early identification of and intervention for students with learning and/or behaviour support needs and relies on data to make decisions around levels of support and allocation of resources. Under most commonly adopted RTI models, there are three tiers. Tier 1 is a global intervention, Tier 2 is a more focussed intervention for students who are not progressing as expected, and Tier 3 includes additional targeted support provided in addition to Tiers 1 and 2 support. The four components of RTI (screening, data-based decision making, multi-level prevention system, and progress monitoring) must be implemented with fidelity to improve school and student outcomes.⁶³ The RTI model is commonly applied within the schooling context in SWPBS, referred to as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) in Queensland and detailed further in Section 3.3.2. The three tiers of PBL are represented in Figure 3.2 below.

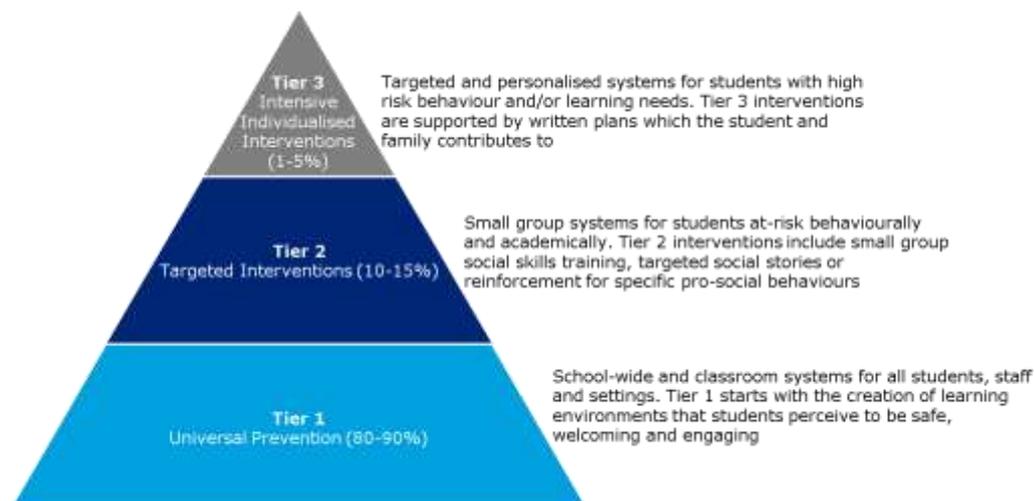
Figure 3.1 Universal Design for Learning



⁶² Cologon, (2013)

⁶³ Department of Education and Training, (2016c). RTI Fact Sheet, Not publicly available

Figure 3.2 Representation of Positive Behaviour for Learning



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, based on NSW Department of Education and Communities (2016)

Table 3.2 highlights other 'good practice' pedagogical approaches established in the literature. All references, with the exception of King-Sears (2008), are related to the Australian context.

Table 3.2 Effective practice from literature

Approach	Description	Source
Differentiation	A structured approach to all dimensions of teaching and learning. It involves creating and implementing strategies to provide students with many ways to participate and learn through access to the curriculum.	Boyle, Scriven, Durning & Downes, 2011, King-Sears, 2008, Shaddock, & Giorcelli, 2009, cited in Department of Education and Training, 2016 Fact sheet
Inclusive pedagogy	A method of teaching that "incorporates dynamic practices and learning styles, multicultural content, and varied means of assessment, with the goal of promoting student academic success, as well as social, cultural, and physical well-being" ⁶⁴ . Instead of providing something different or additional for children who experience difficulties in their learning, inclusive pedagogy seeks to extend what is ordinarily available to everybody ^{65,66} .	Florin (2014), Florin et al (2011)
Adaptive curricula	In line with advice from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) teachers can adapt the national curriculum for some students with disability. Adjustment predominantly refers to the extension of	Forlin et al 2013

⁶⁴ Humboldt State University, (2016)

⁶⁵ Florin and Black-Hawkins, (2011)

⁶⁶ Florin, (2014)

	the general capabilities learning continua for Literacy and Numeracy to cater for individualised learning plans ⁶⁷ .	
Assistive and adaptive technologies	Any hardware, software or system of technical components and processes that enhances the capacity for all students to engage more effectively with the curriculum and their learning environment ⁶⁸ . Assistive technology allows students with disability to access physical environments, be mobile, communicate effectively, access computers, and enhance functional skills that may be difficult without the technology ⁶⁹ .	Johnston, Beard, & Carpenter, 2007, and Anderson (L), Anderson (KM), & Cherup, 2009, cited in Department of Education and Training, 2016 Factsheet, Forlin et al 2013
Individual planning	Individualised plans that document individual requirements and outcomes, such as those used in Queensland are considered to be good practice in Australia ⁷⁰ .	Dempsey, 2012 cited in Forlin et al 2013
Co-teaching	The intentional collaboration of class teachers and specialist teachers involving co-planning, collaborative teaching, co-assessing, and co-evaluating. It is a research based service delivery model for improving outcomes for students with diverse learning needs, and reducing the achievement gap ⁷¹ .	Salend, Gordon, & Lopez-Vona, 2002, Murawski & Dieker, 2008, Keefe, Moore & Duff, 2004, Friend, 2007 cited in Department of Education and Training, 2016 Fact sheet

Regardless of the approach that is adopted, quality teaching that promotes outcomes for all students focuses on:

- Student achievement
- Responsiveness to learning processes
- Availability of opportunity to learn
- Alignment of goals and resources (including Information Communications Technology (ICT))
- Provision of scaffolding and feedback
- Promotion of self-regulation and meta-cognitive strategies
- Teachers and students jointly engaging in setting and assessing goals.⁷²

3.3.2 Behaviour management

Behaviour problems in schools occupy a considerable part of the education agenda and media attention and, consequently, behaviour management policies have played a significant role in policy for some time⁷³. Behaviour management literature for all students states that there is an established link between school quality and behaviour management.⁷⁴ Rogers⁷⁵ states that peaceful, quiet, respectful schools, where the

⁶⁷ ACARA, (2016)

⁶⁸ Department of Education and Training, (2016d)

⁶⁹ Forlin et al, (2013)

⁷⁰ Dempsey, (2012)

⁷¹ Department of Education and Training, (2016e)

⁷² Forlin et al, (2013)

⁷³ Slee, R. (1995)

⁷⁴ Towl, (2007)

⁷⁵ Rogers, (2006)

primary focus is learning, promote good behaviour. Best practice behaviour management is both positive in nature and proactive.⁷⁶

According to the 'Evidence for Learning Toolkit' (the Toolkit), behaviour intervention programs can have a moderate impact on academic outcomes (rated at an additional four months' progress on average). Using Australian evidence, the Toolkit concludes that behaviour interventions can produce large improvements in academic performance along with a decrease in problematic behaviours, particularly when targeted interventions are matched to specific students with particular needs or behavioural issues.⁷⁷

The National Safe Schools Framework provides Australian schools with a vision and a set of guiding principles that assist school communities to develop positive and practical student safety and wellbeing policies.

The Framework is based on the following overarching vision:

*"All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing."*⁷⁸

The Framework, agreed to by all Australian ministers for education, provides a supporting structure for the Australian Government to collaborate with state governments in ensuring all school communities are safe and supportive.

The framework supports the introduction of Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) across Australian jurisdictions.

Any policy or materials relating to behaviour modification must ideally be delivered in the context of broader goals relating to positive behaviour. As an example, behaviour reference materials within the NSW Department of Education are delivered with explicit reference to their wellbeing framework.⁷⁹

Positive behaviour support

Behaviour management is most effective when contextualised in regard to whole school support for curriculum and teaching adjustment. This section will detail one widely used behaviour management approach, PBL, commonly known as SWPBS in international jurisdictions.

The Carter Report identified that there was a growing evidence base to support the use of a positive behaviour support approach to addressing challenging behaviours. It noted that positive behaviour support focuses on looking at the cause of behaviours, developing new ways to meet the persons' needs, and improving their life to reduce the incidence of challenging behaviours⁸⁰.

PBL is a "broad range of systemic and individualised strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviour".⁸¹

There has not been an independent and comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of PBL in Australian schools, however there have been discrete evaluations. In 2008, the University of Western Sydney partnered with the Western Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education to evaluate the implementation of PBL in schools there. It was found that:⁸²

⁷⁶ Alton-Lee, (2003)

⁷⁷ The Education Endowment Foundation, (2016)

⁷⁸ Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2010)

⁷⁹ NSW Department of Education and Training, (2017)

⁸⁰ Review of the Regulation of Restrictive Practices in the Disability Services Act 2006

⁸¹ Department of Education and Training NSW, (2016)

⁸² Mooney, Mary, et al. (2008)

- The introduction of PBL has made significant positive changes to the capacity of Department of Education and Training schools in Western Sydney Region to respond effectively to students' behaviour.
- It has enabled schools to develop coherent whole school practices that enhance teaching practices and support positive behaviour.

Meta-analyses of SWPBS in international literature, while not conclusive as to effects of these interventions, have shown positive results,⁸³ and a randomised controlled trial conducted in the United States showed that when implemented with fidelity, SWPBS led to declines in the use of disciplinary action in schools.⁸⁴

Case study 3-2 below outlines the observations made within the Shaddock Review around implementation of SWPBS in international contexts, and the implication for implementation within Australian jurisdictions.

Case study 3-2 The Shaddock review

- In the report of the Expert Panel on students with complex and challenging behaviours, it was noted that Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support had been implemented, with varying degrees of success, in jurisdictions across the world – most recently, in New Zealand, which implemented SWPBS in conjunction with substantial support from the Government.
- An examination of SWPBS across seven American states found the following success factors for successful implementation in schools:
 - *Funding for the initiative for a minimum of three years; visibility and information sharing; political support that involved regular opportunities to report on progress and outcomes to the highest levels of administrative authority; and policy that supported the building of strong social cultures in schools.*
- The subsequent recommendation of the Report was that the ACT Education Directorate (a) endorse School Wide Positive Behavioural Support; (b) resource and support schools to implement the program for a minimum of three years; and (c) evaluate the success of the program.

A case management or wrap-around approach that focuses on the whole child, rather than just their education, can be effective in improving student outcomes, including assisting students to either re-enter or remain engaged in the school environment.⁸⁵ This includes coordination between government agencies and social service providers. In relation to case management and coordination of wrap around services, Shaddock et al (2015) found:

"Approximately 80% (286) of teachers surveyed, who had engaged in case management to support students with complex needs and challenging behaviour, stated that using this strategy was moderately or extremely useful."⁸⁶

3.3.3 Restrictive practices

Literature and recent governmental reviews of restrictive practices, both in schools and in the disability services sector, strongly encourage the elimination of their use. Specifically, two Senate inquiries ('Access to real learning' and 'Inquiry into Violence, abuse and

⁸³ Solomon, (2012)

⁸⁴ Bradshaw et al, (2010)

⁸⁵ ARDT Consultants, (2011)

⁸⁶ Shaddock et al, (2015), p.172

neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings') have recommended to the Australian Government that it work with the states and territories to implement a national zero-tolerance approach to eliminate restrictive practices.⁸⁷

The Carter Report identified that disability service providers relied too heavily on restrictive practices, that restrictive practices can cause injury to a person with a disability, and are a potential violation of the person's human rights.

In addition, the Shaddock review found that:

*"Restrictive practices such as physical restraint or seclusion may only be used to prevent imminent harm, where it is the least restrictive option, respects the dignity of the student, is proportionate to the risk presented, used for the shortest period of time possible, with the least force and recorded, monitored and subject to appropriate oversight."*⁸⁸

These reviews are consistent with United Nations policy, with the UNCRPD recommending that states "take immediate steps to end such practices (restrictive practices), including by establishing an independent national preventive mechanism to monitor places of detention—such as mental health facilities, special schools, hospitals, disability justice centres and prisons".⁸⁹

These findings are based on a wide range of evidence on the detrimental and unnecessary nature of restrictive practices. A sample of this evidence is included below:

- The Seclusion and Restraint Project⁹⁰ report found evidence of a consensus between people with lived experience of mental health issues, their carers, family members and support persons as well as mental health practitioners that the use of seclusion and restraint is:
 - Not therapeutic
 - Breaches human rights
 - Compromises the therapeutic relationship/trust
 - Can be reduced.⁹¹
- In 2009, the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum recognised that: *"...involuntary seclusion and restraint should only ever be used as a last resort emergency safety measure and in those instances carried out in a respectful way, with checks and balances, by appropriately trained staff"*.⁹²
- The Australian Psychological Society states that the long-term impact of restrictive practices in childhood is not well understood. Some studies have shown that *"psychological problems such as fears and phobias, impaired trust, and cumulative re-traumatisation are among the consequences of restrictive practices"*.⁹³

Following the Carter Report and the subsequent amendments to the Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld) in 2013, disability service providers are required to develop a positive behaviour support plan in order to use restrictive practice in a regulated way.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training policy on restrictive practices is an example of policy phrased with reference to best practice. Its key features are included

⁸⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016), Commonwealth of Australia (2015)

⁸⁸ Shaddock et al, (2015), p.15

⁸⁹ UNCRDP, (2013)

⁹⁰ A report prepared for the National Mental Health Commission by the University of Melbourne investigating and identifying instances of best practice in reducing and eliminating the practices of seclusion and restraint in relation to people with mental health issues.

⁹¹ Melbourne Social Equity Institute (2014), p.172

⁹² National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, (2009), p.7

⁹³ Kennedy & Mohr, (2001), Selekman & Snyder, (1996), cited in Australian Psychological Society (2011)

below, noting that a separate and independent review of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Victorian policy has not been undertaken.

Case Study 3-3: Victorian Department of Education and Training School Policy and Advisory Guide (Restraint of Student)

The policy by the Victorian Government specifically states:

When physical restraint or seclusion may be used: “when it is immediately required to protect the safety of the student or any other person” (more specificity in policy).

When physical restraint or seclusion should not be used: such as “restraint and seclusion must not be included in a Behaviour Support Plan or be used as a routine behaviour management technique, to punish or discipline a student”.

How to restrain: brief guidance is available in the policy, with more detail provided through the ‘Guidance for Responding to Violent and Dangerous Student Behaviours of Concern’ document.

Actions after restraint has been used: a list of actions that includes reporting of the physical restraint/seclusion, providing supports for those involved, and maintaining records of the incident.

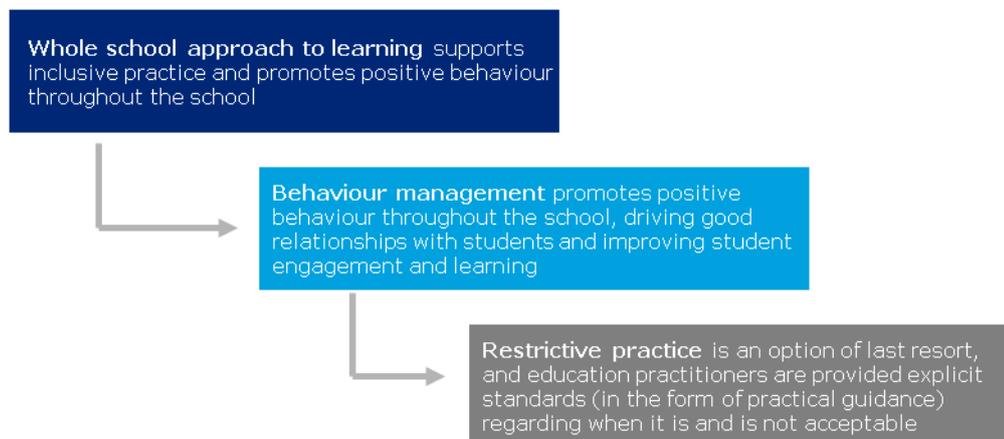
The policy draws on the following key pieces of legislation: *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*, *DDA, Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 (Vic)*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*.

In particular, Victoria’s policy around restraint does not allow for the **planned** use of restrictive practice as part of an individual behaviour plan. The Shaddock Review recommended a framework for monitoring behaviour support plans that allow for the use of planned restrictive practice.

The goal of restrictive practice is a reasonable one – to prevent harm to the student exhibiting the behaviour, and to other students, and school staff. However, it is significantly different to other behavioural management techniques in that it risks negative child wellbeing outcomes – in terms of feelings of exclusion, and the risk of physical and psychological harm.

The entire schooling system should be geared towards eliminating the use of restrictive practice. Inclusive classrooms limit the incidence of troublesome behaviour and the skilled application of effective methods for managing behaviour in the classroom reduce necessity for more extreme responses. An example of a supportive framework which works from the basis of inclusive practice in the classroom is outlined in Figure 3.3. Even in an environment orientated toward eliminating restrictive practice to the greatest extent possible, teachers must be adequately equipped to know when and how to undertake restrictive practice. Uncertainty and risk associated with their use should be reduced through clear, unambiguous advice from the Department.

Figure 3.3 Desired behaviour management framework



Source: Deloitte Access Economics

3.3.4 Workforce capability

The previous sections – curriculum and pedagogy, behaviour management, and restrictive practices – lead into the key workforce skills which are essential to support students in an inclusive classroom environment. Teachers are knowledgeable about and skilled in the contemporary practices proven as effective in teaching in classrooms with diverse needs, including students with disability, via exposure and access to:

- high calibre, contemporary pre-service training
- evidence-based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs
- real-time support and guidance, such that challenging classroom situations can be appropriately and effectively managed
- constructive professional collaboration.

School leaders understand their legislative and policy obligations, are effective at relating these obligations to their teaching staff, and draw on available resources and information in developing practice for students with disability.

Any approach to workforce (including professional officers, support personnel, and teaching staff) development requires consideration of three distinct elements: selection into the workforce; ongoing PD; and specialist resources.

A coordinated response

Developing a workforce in an area as complex as this with a broad range of learning styles and preferences involves a coordinated and strategic response.

The Victorian Review of the Program for Students with Disability advised the development of an Inclusive Education Institute, to assist with capability building, leadership development and the implementation of a workforce capability strategy.

In Ireland, The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disability with particular emphasis on children. The Council plays a role in coordinating research and policy advice, but also in preparing information relating to training in this field across Ireland.

Selection

A necessary precursor to selection is the availability of pre-service training to support the development of these skills while teachers are undertaking their Initial Teacher Education

programmes. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* outline the following areas for graduate teachers to demonstrate knowledge and understanding within:

- Strategies for differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- Legislative requirements and teaching strategies that support participation and learning of students with disability.

The workforce capacity and capability of the education system was examined in detail in the *Senate Inquiry into Access and Attainment of Students with Disability*. It recommended that the government ensure that beginning teachers enter the classroom with best-practice skills in the inclusion of students with disability.⁹⁴

Ongoing PD

The *Senate Inquiry into Access and Attainment* recommended the following in relation to ongoing PD:

- The government should ensure current teachers, principals and support staff are supported to develop inclusive education skills in areas such as UDL, differentiated teaching and cooperative learning.
- There should be a national approach to modifying the curriculum for students with disability. This should include implementation tools and PD support for teachers to ensure that all students are supported to learn to their fullest potential.
- Establishment of a national qualification standard for teacher aids and assistants should be investigated, to ensure they have the knowledge and skills required to support learning for all students. States and territories should also provide guidance on the role of support staff in inclusive classrooms⁹⁵.

In relation to training for behaviour management specifically, literature suggests that skills training for staff in understanding the reasons for behaviour are central to interventions that reduce or eliminate behaviour⁹⁶. Providing parent training in positive programming and applied behaviour support approaches can be another key component to effective support.⁹⁷ Schools can become community hubs for engaging parents with teachers in these programmes.

Specialist resources

Access to a range of specialists with specific knowledge and expertise in the education of students with disability, and behavioural management, is important to augment the skills of teachers and provide specialist support when required. Specialists include, but are not limited to:

- **External to school:** Speech pathologists, Occupational Therapists (OTs), physiotherapists, nurses, and advisory teachers.
- **Within school:** Inclusive education leaders, teachers of students with disability, Guidance Officers, psychologists, counsellors.
- **In class participation support:** Auslan interpreters and learning models, participation assistants and note takers.

In reviewing the benefits of specialists within schools, the Shaddock review, which was an investigation that focussed on student behaviour, focussed predominantly on psychologists and counsellors. It found specialists complement the classroom experience of teaching staff, can assess the cognitive capacities and needs of students with challenging behaviours, work alongside schools to develop and monitor evidenced based

⁹⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016)

⁹⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016)

⁹⁶ Disability Services Commission, (2011)

⁹⁷ Gavidia-Payne, and Hudson, (2002)

targeted interventions and provide ongoing counselling support to students and their families.⁹⁸

An integrated workforce strategy must consider the complementary role that specialists play, and consider how best they can be utilised to play this role. Considerations include school-level decision making around necessary staff, provision of specialist support from outside the schooling sector, and the advice disseminated by the sector around the spread of specialist time across teachers and students.

3.3.5 Professional collaboration and information sharing

Professional collaboration and information sharing are a means of building teacher skills and individual school and collective resources.

Professional collaboration and information sharing elements are an important aspect of the education system, as they help drive evidence-based practices and spread good practice – particularly in an environment of school leader autonomy. The use of research and evidence based practice in schools is identified as an important driver of inclusive practice.⁹⁹ Effective professional collaboration networks give teachers access to real-time support and guidance.

Case Study 3-4: ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD)

- The ACT ETD initiative implemented a new model for specialist support roles in schools under MSSD. This approach used school based Disability Education Coordinators (DECOs) who worked with school principals and leadership teams to improve opportunities for students with disability in each school. The initiative included the following elements:
 - Online learning environment to provide a professional learning community for DECOs to share their school-based projects.
 - Multimedia professional learning for DECOs was designed and delivered covering digital content creation, editing and distribution.
 - The collaborative professional learning sponsored by the Education Directorate (Communities of Learning) modelled good practice in the use of communications technologies to encourage teachers to use and embed assistive technology in the classroom.

Source: Phillips KPA, (2014), p.3-5)

When discussing professional collaboration within schools the Victorian review of the Program for Students with Disability had two main findings:

- Teachers who have a positive sense of self-efficacy in relation to collaboration have more positive attitudes towards inclusion.
- Support from other teachers is a powerful and necessary resource to empower teachers to problem-solve new instructional challenges.¹⁰⁰

Schools and teachers often collaborate to improve their knowledge and performance. Often this is undertaken informally. Schools also engage in formal collaborations with other schools, both directly and virtually. Such initiatives are to be applauded and rewarded to scale-up achievement, expectations and engagement.

⁹⁸ Shaddock et al., (2015)

⁹⁹ Arthur-Kelly, (2008)

¹⁰⁰ Victorian Department of Education and Training, (2016b)

3.3.6 School-level data analysis

Schools effectively use student data and information to monitor and support student achievement, and transitions between education settings is aided by systematic, timely, universal information exchange. The collection of comparative data across jurisdictions, schools, and classes within a school, improves the identification of practices and policies that work from those that do not.¹⁰¹ As such, schools should be using data to inform and evaluate decisions, interventions and initiatives, including practice in the classroom.

School analytical capability should cover overall school performance as well as the following areas:

- The performances of students from identified priority groups (including students with disability)
- Evidence of improvement/regression over time
- Performances in comparison with similar schools
- Measures of growth across the years of school.¹⁰²

In addition, teachers need to have access to evidence based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs. The analytical capability links to effective pedagogical practice, which requires that schools and teachers are routinely evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and using these evaluations to make adjustments to practice.¹⁰³

The sharing of student information should facilitate students' effective transition between education settings. Systematic, timely, universal exchange of student information, including summaries of approaches that have been found to be either effective or unsuccessful, can improve student transitions between schools, and year levels within a school.

3.3.7 Physical environment

Schools' physical environment and infrastructure can play an important role both in creating an inclusive environment, and also as a behaviour management tool. Schools' physical characteristics support and encourage inclusion and differentiation.

The Shaddock Review identified universal design for inclusion, "the creation of accessible buildings and infrastructurereducing the need for individual adjustments",¹⁰⁴ as effective in addressing challenging and complex behaviour. The physical environment can include: physical space and equipment, temperature, humidity and ventilation, lighting, acoustics, stimulation, safe classrooms, and playground design.¹⁰⁵

In the context of service provision for people with disability, the Australian Psychological Society¹⁰⁶ recommends that clinicians ensure that the physical environment is designed so that clients:

- Feel safe, to prevent crises
- Have access to quiet space and privacy
- Have some level of control over, or choice regarding, their environment
- Have access to communication aids to improve receptive and expressive communication with others.

¹⁰¹ Matters, (2006)

¹⁰² ACER, (2012)

¹⁰³ ACER, (2012)

¹⁰⁴ Shaddock et al, (2015), p.111

¹⁰⁵ Mitchell, (2014), and McGrath, (2014), cited in Shaddock et al, (2015).

¹⁰⁶ The Australian Psychological Society (2011)

For children with a range of sensory difficulties, the classroom environment can be particularly difficult.¹⁰⁷ There is empirical evidence to support the use of behaviourally based interventions in the treatment of sensory differences when they interfere with learning, and these have proven efficacy across an array of behaviours including those often associated with sensory difficulties such as aggression, tantrums, self-injury, vocal and motor stereotypy, including when evaluated in the Australian context.¹⁰⁸

3.4 Resourcing model

A resourcing model which supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential is one which ensures that the available resources are targeted in accordance with variation in educational need across the schooling system, while at the same time allowing schools to adopt practice which will limit the impact of varying needs, through whole school approaches.

This review has adopted the following principles as the overarching point of reference for analysis of resourcing for students with disability.

1. **Based on need.** A resourcing model which supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential is one which ensures that resources are targeted in accordance with variation in educational need across the schooling system, including as it manifests among students with disability.
2. **Flexible and reflective of local school context.** Effective funding models provide resources in largely un-tied manner, which allows for flexible targeted use towards priority areas of investment as determined by school leadership. Guidance and accountability measures are critical to successful deployment of flexibility.
3. **Simple and transparent.** The motivation for simplicity of design in resourcing models is to ensure ease of understanding and administration for both schooling systems and individual schools.
4. **Predictable at a school level and sustainable at a sector level.** Schools operate and plan most effectively when they have an understanding of their expected resourcing over time, with the long-term sustainability of any resourcing model contingent on the growth in funding levels reflecting growth in overall educational needs.

Evidence from high performing systems indicates that schools should have the capacity use flexible resources to provide whole school support in a range of ways:

- Access to training and PD, offered either through the Department or externally, relating to differentiated teaching and learning or other aspects of education for students with disability
- Time for teachers to develop lesson plans and modify curriculum for the whole classroom
- Purchase of alternative teaching materials.

Schools can then utilise resourcing to provide adjustments for individual students with disability in a range of ways:

- Adequate scope for teachers to develop lesson plans and modify curriculum for individual students
- Development of teaching materials in a form specific to the student's needs
- Separate supervision to complete certain tasks, such as assessment
- Assistance with mobility and hygiene.

¹⁰⁷ APSEA, (2013)

¹⁰⁸ Dounavi, (2011), Devlin et al, (2007), Cooper et al, (2007), Odom et al, (2003), Prior et al, (2011) cited in APSEA, (2013)

An example of a model which recognises that the school has a responsibility to provide adjustments throughout the classroom, but still acknowledge the need for additional support, is that adopted NSW, highlighted below.

Case Study 3-5: Targeted Funding: Key elements of Integration Funding Support

- Guidelines issued by the NSW Department of Education provide a case study into how targeted funding can be delivered in a way which ensures it is effectively geared toward addressing needs, is delivered in a flexible way, and ensures accountability for how it is spent.
- Under the guidelines, students must have essential additional learning and support needs that cannot be met from the full range of school and local resources and schools must be satisfied that they have attempted to address needs through quality differentiated teaching and learning, prior to applying for support.
- The student profile provides an objective summary of the student's educational needs.
- Principals have the responsibility for determining the most appropriate ways of using the annual total school funding to meet the identified learning and support needs of the targeted students.
- Adjustments supported through targeted funding should be documented and regularly evaluated; schools must have a plan in which show the school community how they propose to use the funds to support students, with accountability for the effective use of the funds established in the annual report.

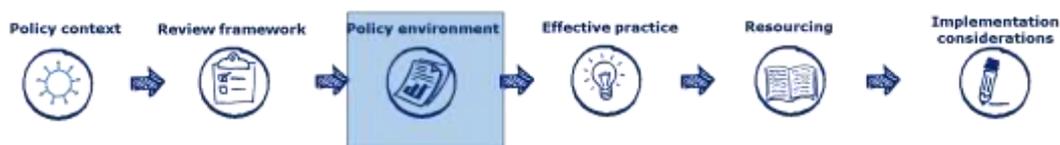
Source: NSW Department of Education, Integration Funding Support guidelines

This section (*Section 3*) has established the **framework for the review** of education of students with disability in the Queensland state school system. It has drawn on international academic literature, the expert views put to this review and the outcomes of past policy and legislative review to described the features and elements of a high performing school system that supports *all* students achieving to the maximum of their potential.

Together, these features and elements provide a point of reference for assessing the current policy, practice and resourcing environment in the Queensland state schooling sector.

The next section (*Section 4*) is the first in a series of sections that presents the review's findings and recommendations. Its focus is **policy objectives**. It examines the current Queensland situation and includes recommendations for moving towards the ideal.

4 Policy environment



This section examines the overarching policy framework that governs the Queensland state schooling system.

International obligations and increasing accountability at a national and international level mean that schooling systems must be equipped to drive improvement in outcomes for all students. Expectations and responsibilities for the education of students with disability are higher than at any point in our history. More than ever, there exists an expectation that education systems will develop strong policy frameworks that drive towards more inclusive schooling systems and better outcomes for *every student*.

Such a policy framework provides the broad parameters and settings that allow the schooling system to translate these obligations and a vision for inclusive education into tangible student outcomes.

This section describes the existing policy environment within Queensland state schools, in reference to the effective framework outlined in Section 3.2. This section draws alternatively on policy documents and specific review evidence.

4.1 Legislative and policy awareness

This review has noted that international, national and state legislation guides education providers in delivering quality and inclusive education outcomes for students with disability. Importantly, there is also a strong community sentiment that places expectations on education systems and providers to support the achievements of improved educational outcomes for all students.

The overarching legislative instruments outlined in Section 2 are clear in the expectations they establish for the environment that education systems must create for students with disability. These requirements do not capture the entirety of the expectations or aspirations that are held for these students, but they nevertheless provide a set of minimum acceptable standards that schooling systems must meet.

The pursuit of higher standards requires transcending universal recognition and appreciation of the governing legislation and the cultivation of a policy environment which drives school leadership and practice to achieve greater outcomes.

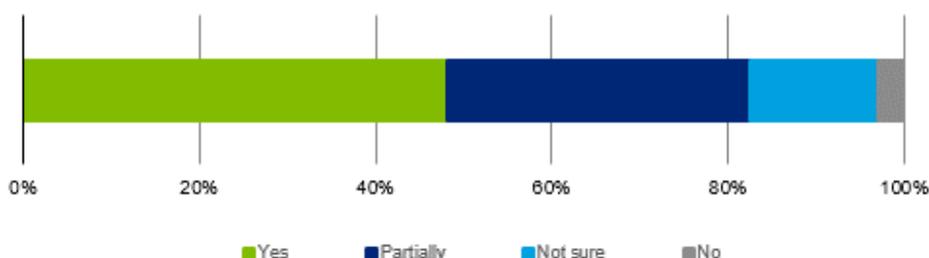
4.1.1 Current Queensland situation

Awareness of the DDA and DSE, as well as the broader policy and legislative context, was tested through this review's survey and consultations. This in part tested the effectiveness of initiatives geared toward promoting DSE awareness, such as the training materials developed through the MSSD initiative and promoted to principals and school leadership and the e-learning accessible to practicing teachers in Queensland.

The teacher/support staff survey found that 62% of respondents were fully aware of the DDA and DSE. 23% of respondents stated that they were aware of both instruments but

only partially aware of a school’s requirements.¹⁰⁹ As reflected in Chart 4.1, over 80% of teacher survey respondents indicated that, in their view, their school fulfilled or partially fulfilled its requirements under the DDA and DSE.

Chart 4.1 Does your school fulfil its requirements under the DDA and the DSE? (n=1,338)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, Review Survey

Results from the principal survey suggest that principals know about the existence of the Standards, but are still partially unaware of a school’s requirements under them. 98% of principals indicated that they had been fully briefed on the DDA and DSE and 85% stated they were aware of the recent review of the Standards. However, only 60% indicated that they were fully aware of the school’s requirements under the DDA and DSE – a similar proportion to teachers.

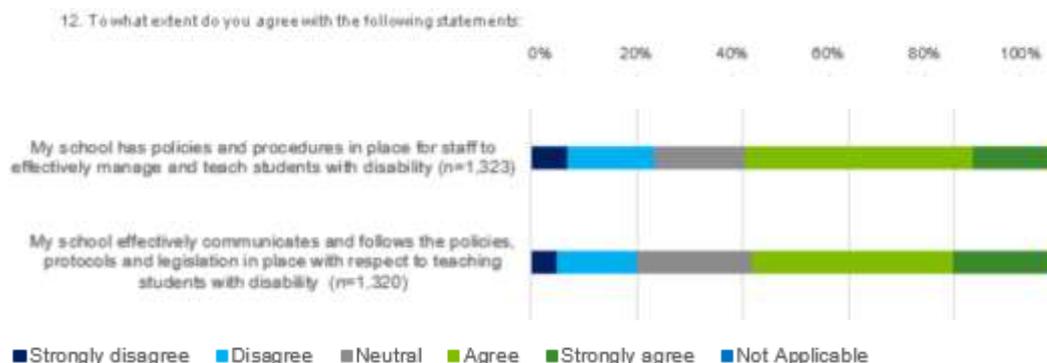
The review team also explored overall understanding and awareness of the policies surrounding students with disability within Queensland state schools throughout consultations. Around three-quarters of school staff presented a broad understanding of the DDA and DSE. However, only around half stated that they were aware of the Department’s policies in relation to students with disability.

Policy and legislative awareness levels were low among parents and carers who engaged with this review, with agreement at only four parent consultation groups that participants were aware of the DSE and DDA. The same proportion of parent groups were unaware of the community resources available to them, and stated that they were uncomfortable in advocating on their child’s behalf.

Systems disseminate extensive policy advice and school leaders play a critical role in consolidating and communicating this to staff. Confidence in this process is high across schools, with almost 60% of school staff surveyed feeling their school leadership team effectively communicated and followed policies with respect to disability (Chart 4.2).

¹⁰⁹ Other respondents were either aware but don’t know their requirements under them, unaware of one or both acts, or unsure.

Chart 4.2 Staff recognition of state-wide policy communication



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, Review Survey

However, this review’s examination of existing policy materials revealed scope for a stronger and more consistent reference to the overarching legislative responsibilities of everyone in the schooling sector. The Inclusive Education Statement, School Planning, Reviewing and Reporting Framework (SPRRF) and Every Student Succeeding - State Schools Strategy 2016-2020 (ESS) are examples of centrally distributed strategic documents which do not currently explicitly reference the DDA or DSE. Ensuring that every signal that the Department sends to the schooling community is reinforcing of both these minimum standards and expectations that exist to transcend them is critical to the improvement of student outcomes.

Awareness of the policy and legislative context

- There is scope for the Department to further strengthen the understanding of the prevailing legislation surrounding students with disability and its implications for school leadership and practice.

4.1.2 Moving towards more effective policy

As Section 2 outlines, a number of legislative instruments drive Australian and Queensland commitments for students with disability. The DDA embraces the social model of disability, while also setting out diagnostic categories, emphasises the impact of cultural and institutional barriers in disabling and enabling people, and relates disability to the practical differences which exist between what people of different abilities are able to do. The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (1991) prohibits discrimination on the basis of impairment.

Legislative instruments provide a tool to anchor policy at the system and school level. These requirements clearly establish responsibilities of providers and the consequences for non-compliance and, as a result, can be utilised as an effective accountability mechanism. Effective legislative standards put power in the hands of students, their families, and advocates, and establish these forces as a means of accountability at the school level.

For this reason, the system should continue to push for greater awareness of and compliance with the relevant legislation. Accessible guidelines should be made for educators at different levels, with expectations made to principals that all school staff should have an understanding of the implications of the broader legislative environment to their practice at the school. Policy documents should reflect the need to improve outcomes for students with disability, and make reference to disability legislation and the broader policy where appropriate. Complaints should be used as an opportunity for organisational learning and improvement.

However, the following must be noted:

- It was highlighted in Section 3.2.1 that it is vital for complex and intersecting obligations to be translated into explicit, readily accessible policies, procedures and guidelines. The Department should be mindful of not emphasising legal obligations without commensurate support and guidance.
- Improving *awareness* of legislation is unlikely to have an impact in its own right. Awareness of and compliance with the DSE would need to be supported by cultural change, improved understanding of disability and how changes in practice can be implemented.

Finally, there is a question as to the cross-over between schools' obligations, and student rights, under national and state anti-discrimination law. This review has principally focused on the DDA as the instrument for establishing an imperative to improve outcomes for students with disability, however both sets of laws apply, and to the extent that there are nuances in their application, the system should seek to understand the implications for schooling delivery.

The DDA, together with its subsequent DSE should be embraced as a force for mobilising cultural and institutional reform rather than as a tool for protection against risk and change.

Recommendation 4-1: Legislative and policy awareness

- The Department should revise existing policies to ensure alignment with legislative obligations and, in particular, that the imperative to improve outcomes for students with disability is adequately reflected. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should ensure legislative requirements are translated into accessible guidelines. The support available for principals to navigate this area – including access to inclusion coaches and training – should be promoted widely and expanded if necessary. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

4.2 Expectations relating to education delivery

The legislative instruments noted throughout this review highlight the need for education providers to not only deliver the same quality of education for students with disability as all other students, but to strive to do this within the same environment as other students. This section examines how the school system currently communicates the expectation of inclusive education across all levels of the education community, and considers how this can be improved.

4.2.1 Current Queensland situation

The Queensland Government's existing Inclusive Education Statement (the Statement) defines inclusive education as a practice and a goal. The Statement reflects a commitment to valuing difference and diversity, and bringing this into the everyday practice of the education community. It is the main instrument through which the Department communicates its commitment to inclusive education as a priority for all teachers and staff.

The Statement provides a broad outline of practices and goals for students with disability. However, it could be improved by articulating a clearer vision with specific goals for educational outcomes as well as outlining appropriate enrolment practices for students with disability. The purpose of this would be to improve the consistency of stakeholders' expectations and aspirations for students with disability.

The system's overarching strategic document is the ESS. It stipulates that schools should cater for individual students' academic, social and emotional needs and provide opportunities and challenging learning experiences for all students.¹¹⁰ The ESS does not include specific reference to education for students with disability – and this is in part based on the system's desired approach to whole school education, as articulated in the title, *Every Student Succeeding*. However, as has been noted, clearly identifying priority groups would supplement a whole school approach and support practitioners to refine their contributions.

The majority of school staff consulted throughout this review reported that their broader awareness of system policy regarding students with disability was limited. This is not considered an adverse finding and like all of the consultation findings it reflects the views of only a sub-set of school staff. However, it highlights opportunities for improvement in the translation and distribution of system policy to school staff. In addition, and acknowledging the intent to adopt a philosophy agnostic to student background, consistent referencing to students with disability throughout departmental policies could improve communication outcomes.

Clarity in plan for inclusive education

- The Inclusive Education Statement could more explicitly outline definitions, expectations and goals for inclusive education.
- The Department's broader strategic policy could be reviewed to ensure specific reference to and acknowledgement of students with disability.

4.2.2 Moving towards more effective policy

As outlined above, scope exists for the current Inclusive Education Statement to more explicitly outline a definition, expectations and goals for inclusive education and, in doing so, translate the established policy intention into clear directives for action.

In addition, an implementation strategy should be developed as a mechanism to drive action in the areas critical for education of students with disability. Such a strategy should be explicit in its definition of inclusive education, the associated goals and the practical mechanisms for achieving those goals. The goals should be established in partnership with the broader education community and should be determined in a fashion that allows progress toward them to be monitored. A compelling narrative and communications strategy systematically deployed will be an important element in the success of such an initiative. This is considered an essential first step to effectively driving change.

As an example, the NSW Government's Department of Education Disability Inclusion Action Plan clearly articulates:

- Guiding principles and aligned frameworks
- Policy and legislative context
- Detail of the full list of policies and resources which inform students with disability
- Articulation of focus areas and the expected outcomes of these areas, and areas of the Department responsible for action
- Monitoring and review arrangements.

Through the course of the development of a stronger policy statement, the priority of achievement in this area can be elevated. This would in turn signal that inclusive education and the support to achieve higher educational outcomes for *every student* is a

¹¹⁰ Department of Education and Training, (n.d.). Every student succeeding State Schools Strategy 2016–2020

system-wide imperative and a definitive point of reference for expectations across the entire education community.

Recommendation 4-2: Statement and implementation strategy

- The Department should establish a shared statement of the goals of inclusive education and develop an implementation strategy, to reflect the aspirations, goals and timeframes that the sector is committed to. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

4.3 Performance measurement and monitoring

All schooling systems are increasingly operating in a performance-orientated environment. It is critical that performance as it relates to all students, or disaggregated performance as it relates to students with disability and other subgroups, is appropriately reflected in a way that serves to drive action and accountability. The focus on the education of students with disability within such frameworks has lagged, partly due to a lack of consistent measures across jurisdictions. This, however, should not be considered an impediment to jurisdictions embedding performance and outcome measures into their performance frameworks.

4.3.1 Current Queensland situation

Measurement and monitoring at the system level

The Queensland state schooling sector has a range of mechanisms to report outcomes at a school, regional and state level and, in doing so, hold itself accountable for achieving better results for all students:

- *MySchool* is the school-level reporting mechanism run by the Australian Government through which performance and financial information for Queensland schools are made public. In addition to the information available via the MySchool website, the Queensland Government publishes detailed school-level information on its own website.
- Budget paper 5 – and in particular the service delivery statements – is the mechanism through which the Queensland Government is held accountable to the Parliament and is the principal mechanism through which departmental accountability to the public and the parliament is established. It principally focuses on state-wide, aggregated NAPLAN results. To the extent that students with disability are included, they are included in reference to an *efficiency* measure (cost of provision per student).
- The Report on Government Services (RoGS) is a benchmark reporting framework overseen by the Productivity Commission. The RoGS provides a nationally consistent comparison of the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of public services, of which schools are a major component. It also provides a reference to the numbers of students with disability, compared across states.
 - All academic achievement outcomes within RoGS are disaggregated for Indigenous students and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. If a consistent measure of disability were available across jurisdictions, this could be a platform for reporting state comparisons in outcomes.
 - RoGS reports on NAPLAN participation rates at a system level. This metric would be a key element of measurement and comparison for students with disability.

At the same time, a range of strategic plans are used to ensure efforts to improve outcomes are both targeted and coordinated:

- The Autism Hub and Reading Centre Strategic Plan 2016-17, outlined a goal for the Autism Hub to use performance measures to monitor progress, establish a

governance committee and expert advisory groups, ensuring students with autism have a voice and connecting parents with school and community support mechanisms.¹¹¹

- The need for schools to focus on outcomes for all students in Queensland is guided by the ESS. It stipulates that schools should cater for individual student's academic, social and emotional needs, and provide opportunities and challenging learning experiences for all students.¹¹²

The Queensland education sector's commitment to transparent performance reporting is evident through the school-level results provided through the Department's Information and Statistics page, as well as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority's statistics page. Both these resources contain a range of data that expand, at a school level, on the information provided in the Department's annual report and service delivery statements. However, it must be noted that neither of these reporting tools contains a disaggregation of results for students with disability.

The system's Key Performance Indicator cascade (KPI cascade)¹¹³ outlines the performance measures at the provider, region and centre levels. These are the measures which are used within the latest Strategic Plan, Service Delivery Statement, Divisional and Regional Operational Plans, Departmental Performance Report; and the headline measures within the School Performance Assessment Framework.

At each level within the cascade, headline results are reported, including levels in achievement and attainment of minimum standards across engagement, achievement and wellbeing. However, the KPI cascade results are not disaggregated for students with disability. This is partly based on the system's approach to whole school learning, which seeks to adopt an approach for all students. However, as has been noted, there are benefits to disaggregation of results due to the insights garnered in relation to equity of outcomes – which whole school support is intended to improve.

The existing performance frameworks (and associated measures and indicators) do not incorporate specific reporting for students with disability. There is scope for disaggregation at all levels, similar to existing approaches used for Indigenous students.

Measures of achievement for students with disability

Measurement and monitoring of student outcomes relies on consistent assessment being conducted across all subgroups. The DSE outline the responsibility of education providers to ensure that **assessment** and certification are modified so that students are not discriminated against on the basis of their disability.

The progress of students with disability should be fairly assessed, and consistent with the aims of inclusive education. Importantly, students with disability should be included in the same assessment as their peers – with some differentiation in the way that assessment is applied, as required.

Assessment that is fairly differentiated for students with disability will have benefits for inclusion as well as aid in the development of accountability frameworks for students with and without disability and support the improvement in outcomes across the board.

Australian Curriculum

Students with disability are instructed and assessed against the Australian Curriculum. Under the Prep to Year 12 Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework (P-12 CARF),

¹¹¹ Queensland Autism Hub (2016)

¹¹² Department of Education and Training, (n.d.). Every student succeeding State Schools Strategy 2016-2020

¹¹³ Department of Education and Training (n.d.), Key Performance Indicator Cascade 2015-16

schools should be instructing all students in the Australian Curriculum. Reporting of A to E achievement of students with disability increased from 66% in 2011 to 83% in 2015, and with improvements in whole school support, may continue to grow. Schools can therefore measure three aspects of the Australian Curriculum assessment which have implications for their performance relating to the education of students with disability:

- Participation in assessment within the context of the Australian Curriculum is an important measure of inclusive practice at the school
- The relative performance of students with disability compared to students without disability in assessment within the context of the Australian Curriculum
- The proportion of students with disability with an Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP).

NAPLAN

Acknowledging the reservations held toward it in some quarters, NAPLAN testing is a key way of measuring academic outcomes at the school level. From 2016, NAPLAN is benchmarked to the Australian Curriculum. Participation in NAPLAN testing is expected for *all Australian students*. There are some instances where students may not sit the tests:

- Exemptions may be granted for students with disability
- Students may be withdrawn by their parent/carer if there are religious beliefs or philosophical objections to testing
- Students were absent during the week of NAPLAN testing.

ACARA provides guidance on appropriate adjustments for students with disability. Adjustments include additional time, breaks, reading of the test to students and a NAPLAN support person to aid in tasks not relating to an understanding of the curriculum, such as shading and colouring.¹¹⁴

Participation in NAPLAN testing is significantly lower for students with a disability recognised in the EAP, with over half of students withdrawn or exempted from testing (Chart 4.3). There is some absenteeism, however at no different rate compared to students without disability. This lower rate of participation could be an indication of schools *encouraging* parents to withdraw, or exempt, their students from testing; or it could be an indication of overall of poor engagement by families of students with disability in schools.

During the course of this review it was highlighted that the publication of NAPLAN results at the school level provided, at times, perverse incentives for schools when it comes to inclusion of students with disability. Avoidance of NAPLAN was raised by either school staff or parents in several schools visited throughout the course of this review. The consultation undertaken as part of this review also highlighted an inconsistent approach, from the perspective of parents of students with disability, in the application of the NAPLAN exception policy.

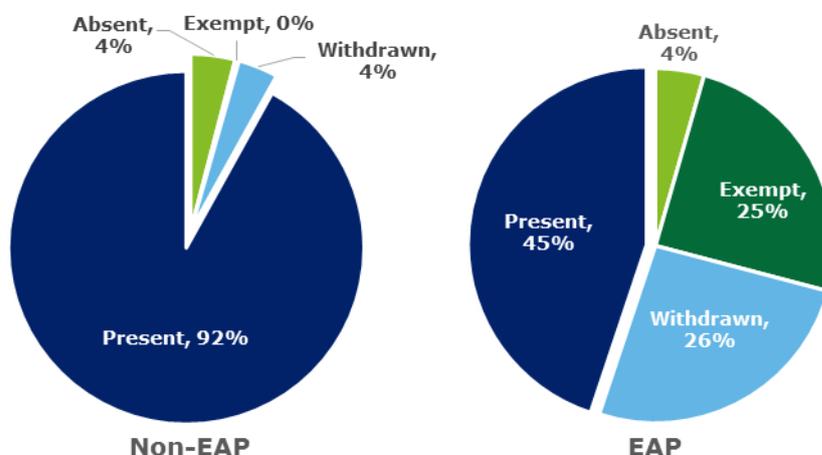
Parent perceptions of NAPLAN were not generally positive – although some noted that the school took steps to ensure students were included in NAPLAN. One indicative response obtained through the survey was:

"The school offered to exclude my son from NAPLAN – this was not a positive."

One school visited noted that they would raise the NAPLAN exemption policy when it was legitimately not in students' interests to sit the test. At one school, the parents explicitly noted that the school asked them not to put their children in for NAPLAN.

¹¹⁴ ACARA, NAPLAN Adjustments for Students with Disability

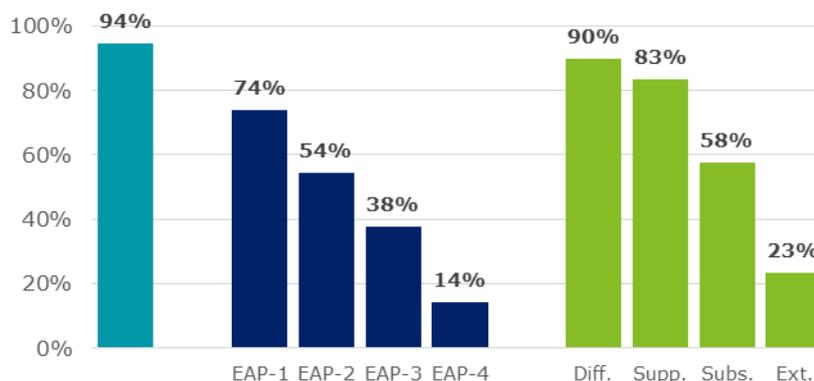
Chart 4.3 NAPLAN participation status, Year 3 to 9 (2015)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data. Individual academic years produce similar results, with lower rates of participation for secondary schooling years.

Participation rates can be further disaggregated by EAP quartiles and levels (Chart 4.4). With higher levels of need for adjustment, the rate of participation in NAPLAN among students with disability declines, to a point of very low rates of participation for the highest levels of verified need.

Chart 4.4 NAPLAN participation rates, by EAP quartile and NCCD level (2015)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data. Participation rates are averaged across academic years. Similar trends are observed at each academic year.

Some students are at different stages of learning, with ICPs available for those students who need to access curriculum at higher or lower levels. As highlighted in Section 5.1.1, ICPs are in use by approximately 35% of students with disability as classified by the EAP. This translates to approximately 2% of students more broadly. The difference in take-up of ICPs amongst schools means that a benchmarking of academic achievement for students with disability would vary across context – although this can be overcome through analysis of data which incorporates ICP use.

Measures of inclusive education

There are currently no indicators of inclusive education collected at a state or regional level. This is not unique to Queensland, and there are no identified instances in Australia of systems doing this. State schools in Queensland have been able to access training under the MSSD initiative on the use of a rubric for measuring inclusion across schools.

Adoption of this rubric has been voluntary and regionally based Inclusion Coaches are able to work with schools in utilising this rubric.

As part of this review, the team spoke to active researchers in the field, who highlighted that indicators of inclusive settings include students working with other students in class, and being spoken to by teachers. Indicators of less inclusive settings were specifically segregated units, and low expectations expressed in teacher sentiment. These indicators, while only examples of the array which exist, highlight the scope that exists to develop meaningful, comparable measures of inclusive practice as an instrument to support improvement in educational outcomes for *every student*.

Measurement of performance within schools and system

- Scope exists to establish a clearer and more explicit set of indicators that relate directly to the practices that drive outcomes for students with disability.
- Scope exists to introduce disaggregation of results for students with disability more explicitly into KPIs at the school and system level.

School performance frameworks

In 2010 the Department introduced Teaching and Learning Audits based on the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) co-developed with ACER.¹¹⁵ These audits matured into School Reviews in 2015 and together with the use of the School Improvement Hierarchy (also based on the NSIT) present a framework for school improvement within Queensland state schools.

At approximately half the schools consulted, staff specifically discussed how they feel accountable for the learning outcomes of students with disability. This was mainly through their accountability to parents, through mechanisms such as co-designing and monitoring ICPs. A smaller number referenced their accountability to the regional and central office.

The Queensland education sector is currently still developing a school improvement model. This model is intended to help schools undertake an enquiry-based approach to school improvement. The model is in its infancy, however schools will be supported to adopt a whole school approach to learning as part of the model.

There are different approaches to measuring and monitoring outcomes at a school level, including some notably effective ones. One school in regional Queensland outlined its strategy of looking at student assessment, then assigning additional teacher help and focus for C- and D+ students. Gain in students' results would be compared between classes, and discussion between the teachers about the correct approach for that student would occur.

4.3.2 Moving towards more effective policy

Measurable outcomes at the school and system level should be established, and disaggregated for students with disability, at the system and regional level, similar to what is currently undertaken for reporting on outcomes for Indigenous students.

Understanding school performance as it relates to any student involves consideration of outcomes as they relate to engagement, wellbeing and achievement. A number of outcome measures exist across the state schooling sector presently which can be used to monitor the effectiveness of schools at providing education to students with disability within these three domains. Of course (particularly within the domain of wellbeing) the Department has the scope to explore further measures which may be useful in obtaining

¹¹⁵ Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), (2012)

insights into the education of students with disability. The review team has compiled a set of data based on the existing administrative data within Queensland state schools that could be collected, utilised as schooling headline indicators, and potentially disseminated, in Figure 4.1 below.

Academic achievement measures should seek to incorporate:

- Levels of achievement in standardised testing for students with and without disability, and the difference in achievement among these groups
- Growth in achievement for students with and without disability, in both NAPLAN and A to E achievement levels
- QCE attainment.

Engagement measures should seek to incorporate:

- School attendance for students with and without a disability
- Use of School Disciplinary Absence (SDA) for students with and without a disability
- Measures of connectedness (of which numerous examples exist within the survey)
- Student retention (within a school).

Wellbeing measures which should be incorporated into school performance measurement and monitoring include:

- Questions about safety, relationships and support¹¹⁶
- Post Year 12 outcomes, including Bachelor or higher study.

Figure 4.1 Measures of outcomes for students with disability



Source: Deloitte Access Economics

Measures of participation which are relevant to the education of students with disability as an intermediate indicator include:

- Participation rates of students with disability in testing – both NAPLAN and A to E testing
- The proportion of students with disability at a school level who are on an ICP

¹¹⁶ Current questions within the SOS include “I can talk to my teachers about my concerns”, “I feel accepted by other students at my school” and “My teachers care about me”.

- Participation of students in QCE and QCIA.

Measurement of inclusion can play a role in helping the system monitor the extent to which inclusive practice is established throughout the system, and can aid in establishing Departmental accountability for inclusive practice at a school level. While such measures can have benefits, given the complex nature of quantifying aspects relating to inclusion, they should be carefully researched and trialled prior to implementation.

Performance frameworks which currently exist throughout the Queensland state school sector have been developed with consideration of the foundational elements of school improvement, as outlined in ESS. The frameworks contain explicit reference to a whole school approach for school improvement. The whole school approach is necessary to drive good practice. There is a potential for these frameworks to utilise identification and analysis of outcomes for students with disability, to help identify areas of concern and drive better practice.

Recommendation 4-3: Performance monitoring and measurement

- The Department should seek to ensure performance and monitoring measures, including goals and targets which reflect the Departmental priorities, are in place at the school level.
- These measures should include intermediate indicators that allow monitoring of the presence – or otherwise – of the conditions that underwrite achievement among students with disability. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

4.4 Monitoring and evaluation

In addition to monitoring and measuring school-level performance, the education system is also responsible for delivering and monitoring programs at the system level – for reasons of scale or for trailing or introducing evidence-based policies.

The policy areas addressed in this review include complex behaviours and inclusive teaching – areas of significant complexity, active research, and policy debate.

It is therefore critical for a jurisdiction like Queensland to continually evaluate its understanding of effective policy and practice as it relates to education of students with disability. While this information is partly obtained through school-level performance, it is equally important to evaluate policy at a broader system level on a continuous basis.

4.4.1 Current Queensland situation

The Department's Evidence Framework is a recent initiative which outlines the Department's strategic plan in terms of how it will build and use evidence. The Framework outlines four key sources of evidence:

- Practice and Innovation – school-level evidence on best practice, distributed through the Evidence Hub
- Evaluation of system initiatives
- Analysis of data to identify patterns and trends and measure impacts
- Investment and participation in research.

Building on this foundation, there are several steps that could be taken to further embed the role of evidence-based decision making across the state schooling sector. The Evidence Framework outlines four key sources of evidence and these have been expanded upon below.

Practice and innovation

The system has a role to play in monitoring performance across all schools. Presently, this monitoring is used to analyse general performance indicators and identify schools for priority reviews. This monitoring can be extended to cover outcomes for students with disability, and be used beyond a compliance setting to identify and promote cases of effective practice.

Evaluation of system initiatives

This review sought to establish the extent to which programs of support for students with disability have been implemented in association with an explicit monitoring and evaluation framework – and the extent to which existing processes within the system support ongoing continuous improvement of programs.

PBL is an evidence-based initiative which has been shown in numerous contexts to be successful in reducing problem behaviours and associated negative outcomes. This program has been positively evaluated in a range of reviews conducted throughout Australia and internationally, and there is a strong level of support for the implementation of this throughout Queensland state schools. The effectiveness of this initiative is highly contingent on the extent to which it is implemented with fidelity. This program is widely considered to be effective, however consultation has highlighted inconsistency or incomplete implementation has limited the effectiveness of the programs and subsequent outcomes.

A best-practice case of an initiative which has been implemented with regard to a systematic measurement and monitoring framework is the Reducing Restrictive Practices trial, outlined further in Section 5.2.1. This program, while trialled on a small scale, has been implemented with regard to a program logic and has involved the collection of baseline data on the populations. Support has been provided to the schools implementing the trial.

Analysis of data

As has been outlined elsewhere in this report, the headline indicators of performance at the school level do not presently include disaggregation of outcomes for students with disability, or indications of the spread in achievement among the highest and lowest performers at a school level. There would be benefit in comparing these outcomes across schools and analysing this information on an ongoing basis when conducting monitoring and evaluation of *all programs* (and not just those targeted at students with disability).

Queensland has a commitment to open data and publishes school level statistics on a range of factors through its data hub.¹¹⁷ The Department notes that quality, robust data informs initiatives and helps measure the impact of these programs. A key example is the link between data analysis and practice for the Every Day Counts initiative.

Research

The central office undertakes research into contemporary educational practice, evaluates this within the Queensland context, and is selective in what is subsequently distributed, and how. Stakeholders noted that this research, conducted by the central office and synthesised for applicability within schools, would be published in an upcoming update of the Department's external website.

One stakeholder consulted from the university sector also highlighted the importance of incorporating researchers in educational practice into the professional networking and collaboration of schools.

¹¹⁷ Department of Education and Training, (2016b)

Building the evidence base through program evaluation

- There is scope for improvement in the consideration of students with disability in all four key sources of evidence which the Department has identified within the Evidence Framework.
- Policies in place to support behaviour and improved practice in education of students with disability can be more thoroughly monitored and evaluated, with the aim of building an evidence base and improving practice overtime.

4.4.2 Moving towards more effective policy

There is an opportunity for the system to make a substantial contribution to the national dialogue and collection of evidence around programs that are effective in the Australian, and in particular the Queensland, context.

All centrally delivered programs, including those which are targeted at improving outcomes for students with disability, should be implemented alongside a monitoring and evaluation framework. Programs not specific to disability should incorporate consideration of students with disability in their monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

An introduction of disaggregated outcomes for students with and without disability into headline indicators at the school level would enable the central office to identify examples of highly performing schools, to better target evidence gathering and consultations around what works in the Queensland context.

Recommendation 4-4: Evidence base in the education of students with disability

- All programs should be implemented in accordance with the Department's overarching monitoring and evaluation framework, with lessons continually drawn from the evolving evidence base to inform refinement of policy and practice.
- Indicators of outcomes for students with disability should be incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of all schooling programs.
- The Department should continue to develop and promote the *Evidence Hub* and other evidence resources and, in doing so, ensure schools maintain access to contemporary research and resources relating to effective practice for students with disability.
- Teachers should be upskilled on data literacy, and an evaluative culture developed throughout schools.
- *This recommendation should be implemented immediately.*

4.5 Parental choice regarding enrolment

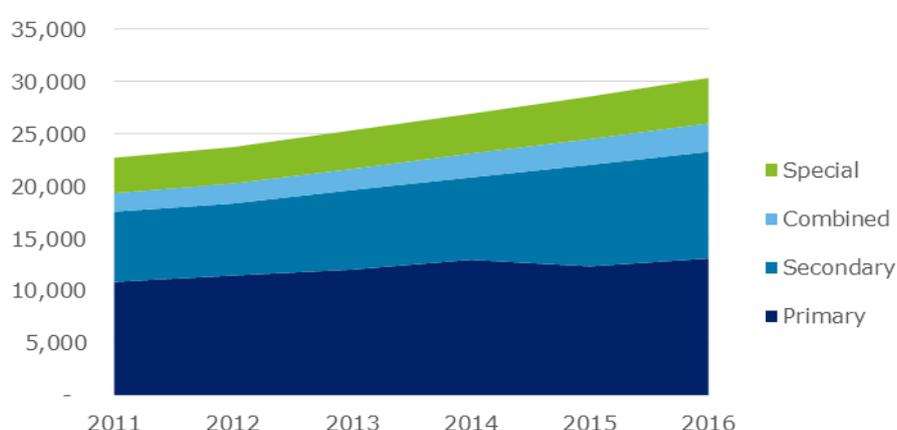
Students with disability across Queensland are educated in a range of different school settings. Academic literature overwhelmingly supports the adoption of fully inclusive education, however notes that the benefits of this education are contingent on quality educational experiences within inclusive settings. Similarly, international obligations drive education providers to deliver educational experiences to students with disability which are of equal quality to students without disability – and focus on the delivery of these experiences within mainstream settings. Recommendations are made to balance these obligations with the principle of parental choice and reflection on the current ability of the sector to universally deliver quality education in inclusive settings.

4.5.1 Current Queensland situation

The distribution of students with a formally recognised disability – as characterised by the EAP – has remained stable across the four school settings (primary, secondary, combined and special schools) since 2011, as shown in Chart 4.5 and Table 4.1. The exception is 2015, with the shift of Year 7 into secondary schooling from primary schooling.

The number of students with disability within special school settings has grown at approximately 5% per annum over 2011 to 2016, just less than average growth of students with disability of 6.0% per annum. Accordingly, there has been a modest drop in the proportion of students with disability in special schools over this time but enrolment in these settings is still far outstripping general population growth. The proportion of students with disability in special schools in 2016 was 14.3%.

Chart 4.5 EAP enrolments, by school setting (2011-2016)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Table 4.1 Growth rate in EAP enrolments, by school setting (2011-2016)

School setting	Average annual growth rate
Special	5%
Combined	9%
Secondary	9%
Primary	4%

Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Note: During this period, the Year 7 academic year was transferred to Secondary schools.

This available data is limited in that it does not allow interjurisdictional comparisons (jurisdictional definitions of disability are inconsistent, and states do not publish comparable data on special school enrolments). Similarly, while it is known from this data that 85% of students with a verified disability are enrolled in mainstream schools, the proportion of those who are in special *classes* is unknown.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability Aging and Carers (SDAC) is conducted every three years, and surveys the population based on their experience of disability. SDAC defines disability as any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months. The limitation of this data is it does not disaggregate by government and non-government schools. SDAC reported 60,000 students with disability across all school types in

Queensland in 2012; in contrast, there were approximately 34,000 verified students with disability across all schools in 2012.¹¹⁸

According to this source, across Queensland schools, 12% of students with disability were enrolled in special schools (equal to the national average), and 33% of students with disability were supported through special classes in mainstream settings (compared to 20% nationally). The proportion of special school enrolments seems to be less prevalent relative to special classes – noting, again, that these results are applicable across *all* schools, not just government schools.

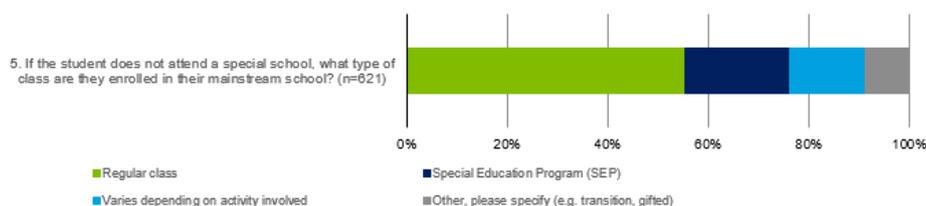
School settings

- The proportion of students with a formally recognised disability who are enrolled in special schools has remained relatively stable since 2011.
- From the data available, the proportion of enrolments of students with disability in special classes appears higher in Queensland than the national average (across government and non-government schools).

Inclusive settings in regular schools

Among surveyed parents and carers whose children did not attend a special school, the majority (55%) indicated that their children were included in the regular class all the time, approximately 20% indicated their child was educated in a Special Education Program (SEP) and a further 15% indicated that there was split enrolment in mainstream and special classes, depending on activity.

Chart 4.6 Class type in mainstream schools



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Review survey

From the survey, 55% of teacher respondents were broadly comfortable with inclusive practice at the school, and 41% of teacher respondents indicated that they were comfortable appropriately differentiating curriculum so that students with disability can be included. Perceptions were lower amongst parents and carers, with 45% broadly comfortable with the inclusive practice at the school – and 32% in the area of curriculum.

One school gave a clear example of how inclusive practice was realised, highlighting that they actively moved away from the use of teacher aides to support students with disability, noting that teachers play a critical role in the long-term development children. This school implemented a system of lead enhancement teachers at every year level to build capacity in different classrooms.

One school implemented a model where they instituted a special needs unit, with all students participating in at least one mainstream class. This was referred to by the school as an integrated model of focus groups. This school defined inclusion as inclusive of student needs – meaning that students with disability could have 20 to 80% of their

¹¹⁸ Productivity Commission, (2014)

classes in a special education environment. This highlighted the variation across schools in the use of terms such as special and inclusive education.

Case Study 4-1: Special school in regional area

Special schools across the state demonstrated a consistent commitment to improving their practice and promoting better outcomes for their students. One school undertook the following to build this:

- Principal came with a collegiate network in special education and was committed to sharing knowledge and resources with other schools and principals.
- Increased networking and sharing experiences with other special schools increased the confidence of teachers and their ability to identify and implement effective practice teaching.
- Implementation of the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support behaviour management program.
- Promotion of an inclusive culture from the top; as described by the school staff in consultations, noting that a special school is not an inclusive school setting.

Level of support offered through special and regular settings

The levels of support for students with disability provided in the various settings across Australia were highlighted in a submission to the Senate Inquiry *Access to Real Learning*. The Inquiry noted that, for children with profound or severe core-activity limitation in mainstream schools, 32.8% were not provided with any special arrangements or support services, compared with 12.7% in special schools.¹¹⁹

In this review, parents and carers at one special school in a regional area highlighted that:

"There's a big gap between special schools and mainstream schools – no in-between. Would like to have a more supportive mainstream structure."

"(Previously their son) went to mainstream and though the teachers tried, just could not include him – he spent three quarters of every day staring at the wall. The support in the classroom is just not enough."

A parent the review team met during consultations indicated that their child would spend half their time in the tent in the back of the room in a mainstream environment, and received more actual *class time* in a special school.

The gap in support between special and regular schools can be bridged, through co-location of special schools and regular primary or secondary schools. Co-location can lead to resource-sharing with special schools providing a source of advice and guidance for other schools, and opportunities exposure to a broader group of students. This can have benefits for students in regular schools (both with and without disability) as well as the students in special schools. The Department has conducted research into the feasibility and benefits of co-location and this should be pursued as an area of further research.

Special schools in Queensland can act as resource hubs for students across all schools – meaning they can still provide support for students with disability in other schools, and students are not disadvantaged through location in inclusive settings. One clear example is the State-wide Vision Impairment Centre offered at Narbethong.

An example of effective practice regarding the provision of support to students with disability by special schools is outlined below.

¹¹⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, (2016)

Case Study 4-2: An example of effective practice in a special school

- The review team visited a small special school in a metropolitan area which was co-located with a primary school.
- The special school exposes students to interactions with students without disability - providing opportunities for developing social skills, play-based learning, and role-modelling.
- The school motivates students and parents and carers through showcasing the outcomes of former special school students.
- The special school is utilising the co-location with a primary school to their advantage – taking part in shared reading activities and sports carnivals. The special school plans to further build on these links overtime.

The benefits

- This special school both integrated with mainstream students – providing students in the special school with an inclusive environment, albeit temporarily – and facilitated the sharing of its resources, both human and physical, with an under-resourced regular school.

Parental choice and enrolment policy

Currently, parents and carers are permitted to enrol their students in any state school unless that school is subject to an *enrolment management plan* or is a special school.

Enrolment in a special school is currently possible only when a parent makes an application to do so, and where the Director-General's delegate (either the relevant regional staff or Assistant Director-General) rules that:

- The person has a disability as defined by the DDA.
- The person has a severe disability which includes an intellectual disability.
- The student is unlikely to attain the levels of development they are capable of unless the person receives special education.
- The student's educational program is best delivered in a special school, taking into account the appropriateness of this placement for that individual.

It should be noted that students with disability who are enrolled in special schools face a significantly higher profile of need than most students in regular schools.

The review team met with parents and carers of students in both special and mainstream settings whose preference was for their child to be enrolled in a special school, with this demand driven in part by the perceived lack of capability in some regular settings to provide appropriate educational environments.

The consultations and survey responses frequently suggested that parents of children with disability chose to send their child to a special school because special schools were the safe option. It was thought that children with disability would not experience bullying in the special school and they would be with highly qualified educators for children with special educational needs. This finding was reflected in the survey, with the rate of parents or carers reporting that their child had experienced bullying in mainstream schools more than double that reported by parents or carers of students attending special schools.

Other parents chose special schools because of negative experiences when approaching their local school. The quotes below are all from different parents, responding to the review survey:

"Mental health and the feeling of being safe is more important to me than high grades."

"Our teacher works hard to implement the curriculum while allowing for the restrictions in my child's abilities. Children are challenged but expectations are realistic. They find alternative ways to assess my non-verbal child's reading abilities."

"(My son wants) a school where the 'kids like me' He needs hands on learning repeated content...He needs to be in a Special School he loved catching the bus with the Special School Students and made friends straight away because they were 'like me Mum their brains don't work right either'".

At approximately half of the schools visited, a parent was present who had been advised that their child would not be accepted as an enrolment at a special school, despite having severe educational needs. Parents and carers at special schools were almost universally satisfied with their child's education when compared to a mainstream environment.

"When parents of a student with Intellectual Disability say they want their child to attend a Special School they should have the right to choose despite what one person thinks. One person has blocked our son from attending Special School and now he is being home schooled which has isolated him."

However, many people whom the review team met with – including parents and carers of children with complex multiple disabilities – did not adhere to this trend.

Participants in consultations facilitated by the Community Resource Unit outlined that they felt their child would get more support at a special school – but chose the regular school setting because they believed in the outcomes of inclusive education – stating that the short-term cost to regular school enrolment would have long-term benefits post school.

Some parents and carers at special schools realised the potential social benefit of inclusion – when asked how the school could improve, one parent responded:

"Have access to mainstream kids! My child being in special school has no neuro-typical peer behaviour to model or copy in regards to school learning."

One issue that was repeatedly raised as a factor in driving choice of school setting was the attitudes faced by parents and carers at the point of enrolment of their students in regular schools:

- This was tested in the review survey. Of the 713 parents and carers who were surveyed, almost 33% stated their child had been refused enrolment or encouraged to go to another school because of their disability.
 - This was raised repeatedly at school consultations. Parents and carers reported having experienced this behaviour at other schools and subsequently transferring their enrolments to the school they were currently at. Parents and carers of students at primary schools reported their experiences in seeking suitable high schools for enrolment and being turned away or advised to go elsewhere.
- Staff at 30% of schools visited through consultations acknowledged there was a broader issue, across the system, of students with disability being subtly encouraged to seek enrolment at another school, or at a special school. Parents and carers at around half of schools visited by the review team reported having been refused, or discouraged, enrolment at a school – generally not at the one visited by the review team.
- In some of the more troubling cases, parents and carers reported their child being encouraged to leave a school they were previously enrolled in. At one small school in a regional area, a parent of a student with a severe intellectual and physical

impairment reported having explored four potential schools before finding one at which the front-office staff provided a welcoming reception to their enquiry.

- Parents in this situation have the option to raise objections in line with the DSE. This parent suggested that regardless of the outcome of their objection, there would be a negative learning outcome for that child due to the strain this made with the school at point of enrolment.

The policy response to this will be further explored in Section 4.6.1 and Section 4.6.2.

Inclusive practice

- The academic literature is conclusive that inclusive education in mainstream classroom settings promotes students with disability achieving to the maximum of their potential, provided the requisite supporting culture, capability and educational practice are in place.
- In this regard, this review finds the quality of inclusive practice in regular schools variable and, as other findings and recommendations highlight, identifies a range of areas where further progress is needed before effective inclusive practice in regular settings will be universally demonstrated.
- Some parents are subject to subtle influences, at the school level, to discourage enrolment in mainstream schools

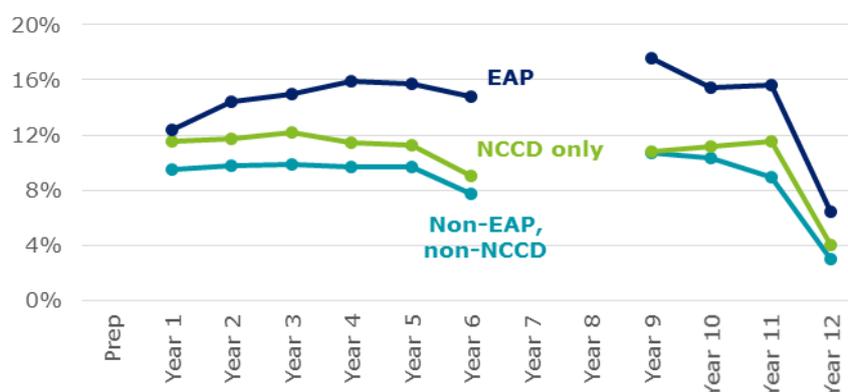
Student mobility

Student mobility or transience is measured by the proportion of 'new students' to a school, where they were not attending their current school in the previous year. It is likely that trends in this indicator will be indicative of transience in the system.

This provides an indication and measure of student engagement within a school, but also reflects higher needs for schools, where new enrolments are associated with higher relative costs.

Students verified under the EAP were more likely to move schools during the course of the year than students without disability, and students who were recognised in the NCCD only. This concurs with evidence from schools that a large number of enrolments every year are from students with disability after the Day 8 collection date, at which students are counted for the purposes of funding determination.

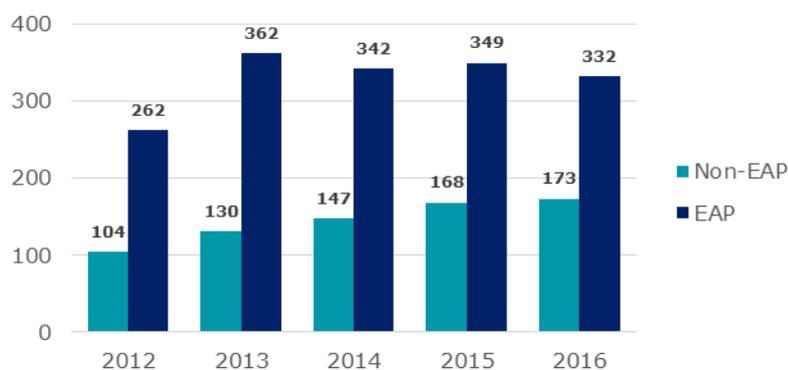
Chart 4.7 New enrolments to a school, by academic year (2015)



Note: Students entering the lowest academic year within a school are excluded, additionally, Prep, Year 7 and Year 8 are excluded from this analysis. Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

Researchers in the field of inclusive education are interested in analysing the movements of students from mainstream schools into special schools, and the reasons for this. This is a relevant area of study for the Queensland schooling sector. This occurs relatively infrequently, with the total movement representing roughly 1.6% of the total population of students with disability.

Chart 4.8 Students moving into special schools (2011-16)



Note: Student record data does not identify the direction of switching within a calendar year. These estimates can be considered as lower bounds, which conservatively estimate the number of students moving, by ignoring incidences when a student appears in record data multiple times for a given year. On average 2% of Students with an EAP-recognised disability move into special schools each year. Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

Mobility amongst students with disability

- Students recognised under EAP are significantly more likely to change schools than students who are not.
- Despite anecdotal evidence of students transferring into special schools, it occurs relatively infrequently, with the total movement representing roughly 1.6% of the total population of students with disability.

4.5.2 Moving towards more effective policy

Consistent with the legislative framework outlined earlier, it is a widely held view among academics, advocates and community groups alike that the default setting of education

for students with disability should be in regular schools, and that a system should strive towards universal delivery in this mode of education. Domestic and international policy encourages education providers to not just deliver the best possible education for students with disability, but to do this within inclusive settings.

The international evidence is clear that these are the environments that best support outcomes achievement among students with disability and indeed that best support high performing school systems overall.

However, enrolment policy must be pragmatic in balancing the pursuit of what is an increasingly accepted preferred model against the systems that today's policymakers and sector leaders have inherited, wherein regular schools are not currently universally suited to meeting the educational needs of all students with disability. It will accordingly take time, and require the effective implementation of the recommendations of this review, before Queensland schools are universally equipped to educate all students with disability to leading contemporary standards.

Many parents and carers seek enrolment of their children in special schools, rather than advocate for improvement in educational settings at their current schools or seeking alternative inclusive environments. Increasing local advocacy would help improve the ability of parents and carers to enrol in their desired settings and this provides further support for *Recommendation 4-6 (Community and parental engagement)*.

The basis for enrolments for students at special schools should be aligned with international obligation to provide school education for students with disability in inclusive settings, contingent on the existence of quality practice within schools. However, parents and carers who wish to enrol their children at special schools have legitimate, educational-based reasons to do so. It has been highlighted throughout this report that mainstream schools across the state are not always equipped to offer the same level of support as special schools. The school system should continually review its policy with respect to enrolment at special schools, as a means for changing the relationship between and the form and function of special and regular schools alike.¹²⁰

With these elements in mind, a shift towards more mainstream school settings must be carefully planned and executed, within the broad framework of iterative improvements in inclusive practice across all schools.

Recommendation 4-5: Special School Enrolment Policy

- The Minister's policy for enrolment of students with disability in special schools should be periodically reviewed following assessment of improvement in practice in regular schools and a review of the role and operation of special schools. *This recommendation is for further review.*

4.6 Parent and carer involvement

Strong and informed parent and carer involvement is a hallmark of an effective policy environment, characterised by parents and carers having the knowledge and capability to advocate for their children through formal and informal avenues.

4.6.1 Current Queensland situation

The Parent and Community Engagement Framework identifies what schools can do to improve learning outcomes for students through strengthening communications between

¹²⁰ Slee (2011)

principals, teachers, students, parents and carers and the broader community.¹²¹ This section tests the adoption of the Framework in practice through a review of parental engagement in schools.

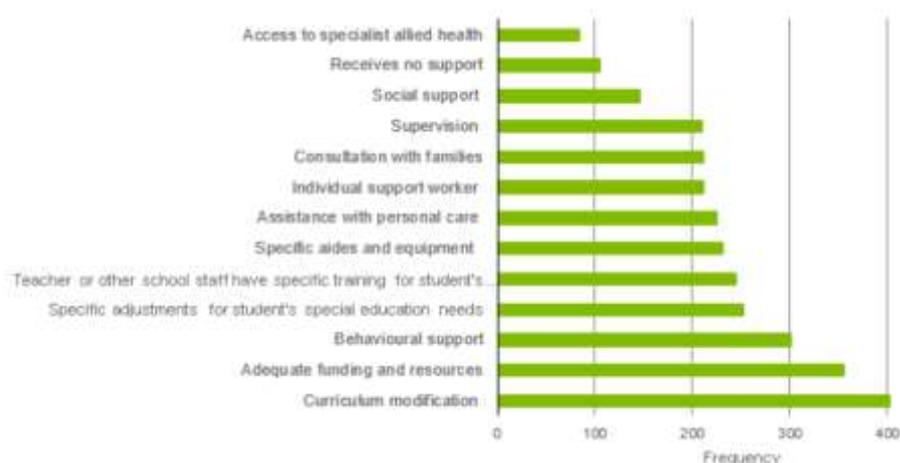
From both the 2010¹²² and 2015¹²³ reviews of the DSE, it is known there is a general lack of understanding, among parents and carers, of the existence and meaning of the Act and the DSE.

The survey and consultation instruments for this review were designed to test awareness and understanding of the standards among parents and carers of students with disability in Queensland state schools. It was highlighted through this review that the majority of parents and carers were unaware of the rights of their child under the DDA and DSE, and in particular had a lack of understanding of their practical meaning.

As was highlighted in Section 4.1.1, more could be done to build awareness of student rights under the DSE among parents, and bridge the gap in policy awareness between parents and teachers.

This review also sought to establish the degree of parental/carer involvement in education. Of 712 parents and carers who responded to this aspect of the survey, over half reported that their student received curriculum adjustment.¹²⁴

Chart 4.9 Parent and carer reports of student-level adjustment (n=712)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey

In the majority of consultations with parents and carers, it was highlighted that parents and carers were involved in the development of individual plans (including ICPs and individual behaviour plans). However this was not universally the case. Some parents and carers in rural and low socio-economic schools noted that they had not been involved in the development of plans. In a survey conducted by CYDA in 2016, 65% of Queensland respondents reported having an individual education plan¹²⁵ in place, with 80% of parents and carers reporting that they were involved in the development of this plan.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Department of Education and Training, (2015)

¹²² Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations, (2012)

¹²³ Urbis, (2015)

¹²⁴ While only 35% of students on the EAP are currently recorded as being on an ICP in 2015, this proportion had risen dramatically over 2015 to 2016 and may be higher as at time of reporting.

¹²⁵ For many parents, the terms "individual education plan", "individual learning plan" and "individual curriculum plan" were interchangeable.

¹²⁶ CYDA Summary of 2016 education survey Queensland data

From the perspective of the school, in consultations, a small number of school staff expressed their frustration that parents and carers would not attend parent/teacher meetings, collaborate on ICPs or show sufficient interest in their child's education. This was not a frequent finding, but was more common among schools in low socioeconomic areas.

As the review methodology involved conducting interviews with parents and carers and teachers separately, it was possible to analyse the difference in messaging from both sides. At one small primary school in a regional area, two of the parents and carers reported that the principal and Head of Special Education Services (HOSES) did not communicate information relating to their children's education – in terms of planning, progress and discussion on behavioural aspect. Parents and carers highlighted staff attitudes to students with disability, and discontinuity in staff support (e.g. changing teachers) as contributing factors. The teachers and principal at the same school spoke about a lack of parental engagement in their children's education.

In the survey, only 29% of parents and carers reported that consultation with families had been undertaken as a form of adjustment, and only 36% of teachers reported that they had utilised families of students as a means of support to provide adjustment for students with disability. At some schools, there is disconnection between the desired level, and type, of parental and family engagement, and the level that actually occurs. This implies that further work can be done on establishing these relationships.

Awareness of legislative and policy context

- Parents displayed inconsistent awareness and understanding of the broader legislative and policy context for students with disability and the implications of this for their child's education.

Parental engagement and advocacy

- Both parents/carers and teachers in some contexts reported a lack of engagement with families as a factor of concern.

Parental advocacy

During consultations, the review team sought to gauge the ability of parents and carers to advocate on their children's behalf. Parents and carers at only four out of 31 schools generally felt as though they were comfortable in this regard. Parents and carers admitted not being fully aware of DDA, DSE and state and community resources. In many cases, the consultations facilitated throughout this review were the first time that parents and carers had come together and discussed issues relevant to families of students with disability in the education system – with this being a more common observation among metropolitan rather than regional schools.

A consultation with the Community Resource Unit highlighted that parents and carers they had contact with were not aware of the advantages of inclusive education – and they were not equipped to effectively advocate on their child's behalf. Simple resources which highlighted this may be produced and disseminated as resources for parents and carers.¹²⁷

Currently, there is no central complaints mechanism or record of complaints relating to students with disability within the Department. This data was sought for this review, and

¹²⁷ Queensland Parents for People with Disability, when they were in operation, produced a publication labelled "inclusive schools", a short document intended to be a guide for parents enrolling their students in inclusive education.

the review team were informed that a central repository was under development. The review team were informed that data on these complaints, as well as the use of restrictive practice, was held by the region, and not passed on to central office in a systematic way.

The lack of a formal complaints mechanism, or any advocacy support for families to make a complaint against a school and/or the Department was a concern expressed during consultations with some disability advocacy groups. The nation-wide move toward school based autonomy exacerbates general concern in this area. The lack of transparency around this has been publicly expressed as a concern by the advocacy group CYDA.¹²⁸

Consistent with this, families who reported instances of poor practice during consultations stated in several instances that they did not know where or how to make a complaint against a school or principal. There were also parents and carers who explained that they were not willing to make a complaint against a particular teacher or school because there could be negative consequences for their child, such as bullying or exclusion. This was a particular issue of concern in smaller rural communities, where the impact of a complaint would be most significantly felt at a personal level.

Any change in the ability for parents and carers, or members of the community, to raise complaints against schools should come with an acknowledgement by the Department of the increased pressures and accountability this will place on school principals – and be introduced with commensurate support.

It is important to note that the two state and national anti-discrimination Acts have intersecting purposes and coverage. Both provide protection for students with disability against direct and indirect discrimination in schools. Guidance available to parents is simply that they can make a complaint to either the Human Rights Commission or the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission, and not both.

4.6.2 Moving towards more effective policy

School education can be positively influenced through parent/carer engagement and feedback, including through channels of complaint where required. As such, improvements to the way the entire education system includes parents and carers, either through involvement at the school or the Department level will benefit Queensland students with disability.

Parents and carers will remain one of the key voices of advocacy for students with disability, and parents and carers have an integral role to play in bolstering the accountability of the system.¹²⁹

In the vast majority of cases, families and teachers want to create positive, constructive partnerships. These foundations can quickly be derailed through ineffective communication and a lack of interpersonal awareness. Teachers need to be trained to be able to work with parents and carers to establish expectations and plans for education for all students. Parents and carers should also be equipped with the knowledge they need to develop positive partnerships. The advocacy group Queensland Parents for People with Disability, when they were active, developed a guide for parents and carers called "I choose inclusion", which gives practical advice on developing positive partnerships with schools and teachers.

Without an active body of community organisations providing advocacy for inclusive education, parents and carers are often uninformed of the potential benefits of enrolment in inclusive settings – and the long-term benefits for their children following the choice to enrol in those settings.

¹²⁸ CYDA Freedom of Information Request, 2016

¹²⁹ Mogharreban & Bruns, (2009) cited in Cologon, (2013)

Parents need resources relating to choosing an appropriate school setting and advocating for their child for placement in that setting. Support is also required to assist parents to advocate for high quality education within that setting, with reference to anti-discrimination legislation if necessary.

The Department presently publishes such resources on its website under “Autism resources”, and should make a sustained effort to promote these more broadly for all students (including those without an EAP-verified disability).

Parents are among the most powerful advocates and sources of accountability for all students, including students with disability, and as outlined in Section 3.2.6, parents need access to formal mechanisms to raise complaints against education providers and have those complaints appropriately investigated. It is essential to the integrity of the complaints handling process that transparent reporting, continuous monitoring and appropriate accountability govern its operation. While this review has not provided any specific comments about the existing complaints mechanism, it is clear that there is scope to improve the transparency of this process, so that the Department, Government and the broader public can be kept aware of where complaints are originating from and why. Understanding this will provide a better insight into the research around the effectiveness of the complaints mechanism into the future.

Protracted complaints are damaging to education providers in regard to litigation costs, and for children with disability who are often kept out of school for long periods of time. The existing complaints mechanisms for parents to take issues forward with the schooling sector and with external bodies should be monitored to ensure they are meeting the needs of the whole education community, including the schooling sector, parents and the broader public. It is important that processes be established to encourage fair and respectful conciliation. It is also important that transparent reporting and analysis is in place.

Recommendation 4-6: Community and parental engagement

- In order to enable parents to make informed decisions, the Department should disseminate advice to schools, parents and the broader education community on the effectiveness and appropriateness of different settings, with regard to the long-term outcomes of students.
- The strength of parental advocacy at the school level should be bolstered through the facilitation of discussion groups, dissemination of resources for parents, and referral to advocacy groups.
- Monitoring of complaints should be undertaken centrally and should be granted a high priority by the Department.
 - This will enable the Department to build consistency in how complaints are treated throughout the state, and will serve to limit the escalation of complaints and lessen the periods of disruption to a student’s participation in school.
- *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

4.7 Sector governance and leadership

In order to establish and maintain a commitment to quality education for students with disability across all Queensland schools, the system’s governance and leadership must be geared toward driving positive change and installing, developing and maintaining a system-wide culture aligned with the established objectives of inclusive education. In order to do this, a strong sense of leadership must be exhibited, and the message that inclusive education is a priority for all staff has to be continually driven. This section

examines the governance of the system, measured levels of commitment to inclusion across all levels of the system, and potential ways to address this over time.

4.7.1 Current Queensland situation

Over recent years, the Department has increased its visibility in the area of education for students with disability, including the notable establishment of the Autism Hub as a centre for research and professional development in the field and the employment of expert autism coaches.

Across education departments, direct responsibility for inclusive education sits with the executive officer responsible for the Engagement and Wellbeing function. This function typically has a mix of operational and strategic policy responsibility. While the senior ranks of the bureaucracy may have ultimate accountability for achieving targets relating to inclusive education, it is this function with responsibility for driving disability and inclusive education policy across the schooling system that needs to be strategically managed.

While education departments across jurisdictions cannot be compared fairly because of significant variances, it is useful to understand alternative structures:

- In the Victorian Department of Education and Training, responsibility for Engagement and Wellbeing sits at the level of School Performance, Indigenous Education, Human Resources and Infrastructure Services.
- In the NSW Department of Education and Training, Engagement and Wellbeing sits at the same level as Indigenous Education, Human Resources and Infrastructure services.
- In the Queensland Department of Education and Training, responsibility for Engagement and Wellbeing sits one level below the other functions outlined above.

As outlined in Section 4.2.1, there is no explicit implementation plan to improve inclusive education outcomes (including the adoption of inclusive education at schools and the improvement of outcomes for students with disability).

A first step in revisiting system governance will be in establishing an action plan for the education of students with disability. Following that, a strong voice within the central office is required to coordinate the efforts of the entire Department to improve outcomes for students with disability, and drive strategic communication that inclusive education is a universal priority (or, alternatively, everybody's business).

The review team met with stakeholders from across the Queensland state school sector, at multiple levels within the central office, regional offices, and of course, at schools around the state. All stakeholders consulted within the Queensland Department have highlighted that they feel they are committed to improving outcomes for students with disability, and doing so within inclusive settings. Internal stakeholders, particularly within regional offices, highlighted that pursuing a pro-inclusion agenda could be enhanced through a more explicit commitment by the system that *inclusive education is everyone's business*.

Analysis of survey data reveals that 82% of responding principals believe their school effectively communicates and follows the policies, practices and legislation in place with respect to students with disability. However, only 56% of responding teachers believe their school effectively communicates and follows these policies.

Stakeholder consultation

Communication with stakeholders in disability and schooling education is necessary to understand the diversity of views around effective practice, and gain an insight into needs across the sector.

The Department currently engages with internal stakeholders, including the Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders very effectively. However, the Department has limited formal structures to engage with broader groups including those representing parents of students with disability, groups focusing on the special needs of marginalised students such as Indigenous students, remote students and students in out-of-home care.

These groups can contribute significantly to the conversation, and this is a function which can be aided through a devoted focus to strategy as well as operations.

Communication with stakeholders

- The Department currently engages with many key stakeholders, however, there is scope to broaden this further to more diverse groups particularly focused on the special needs of marginalised groups.

4.7.2 Moving towards more effective policy

Department structure

The Department needs a plan to establish ownership of action for students with disability throughout the Department, in both state schools and regional offices, in order to drive the message that inclusive education is everyone's business.

As part of this plan, a temporary taskforce should be tasked with developing and implementing this area as a priority while the ownership of inclusive education as a policy area is driven across the Department. This taskforce would need to be:

- Multi-disciplinary and led by an officer granted sufficient seniority to create change within the Department
- Provided as specific a brief as possible
- Receive adequate senior support to ensure messages carry authority and imprimatur across the Department.

The aim of the taskforce should be to establish an ongoing sense of priority for action relating to students with disability and inclusion. This should include a structure which is guided by the following principles:

- Leadership for this important field should come from levels within the Department with sufficient seniority to effect change.
- Stakeholders need to be effectively represented, and a range of views need to inform policy.
- The branches which are responsible for determining policy (within the central office) and implementing this (within the regional offices) need to communicate effectively, and often.
- The need for action is a priority within the Department, and is communicated throughout multiple streams of work within the Department.
- There must be sufficient seniority and influence at a policy level, and the ongoing function of the executive must be able to represent inclusive interests in participation within Departmental Committees.

Policy-making and implementation will be improved through ongoing engagement with an effective advocacy sector. The Department should seek to further engage with the sector as it currently exists. To the extent the Department is able to strengthen the voice from stakeholders - including through direct funding, and in advocating for increased support, it should do so.

Recommendation 4-7: Sector governance and leadership

- In the short term, the Department should introduce a taskforce aimed at implementing the recommendations of this review that are accepted by the Government, and building the foundations required to progress the Department's vision of inclusive education. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - A senior officer should be assigned to this position with an appropriate level of authority to lead the implementation of an inclusive education agenda.
 - The taskforce should be multi-disciplinary and should comprise members from policy, program and operations areas across the Department.
- The strength of advocacy at the system level should be enhanced through further engagement with stakeholders, including advocacy groups. A communications and engagement strategy for the broader disability and school education sectors should be established. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
- In the long term, system governance and leadership must appropriately maintain this area of policy as an area of priority, and balance the need for a visible function for disability and inclusion, with the integration of inclusive principles and disability awareness across all areas of the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

4.8 Culture

Culture is a construct that broadly reflects the aggregated behaviours and ethos of the organisation and, in a somewhat circular relationship, seeks to drive those behaviours into the future. Recognising the vital role that culture plays in influencing outcomes, this section examines current instruments through which the Department can build upon its efforts to drive an inclusive culture across Queensland state schools, and identifies areas for improvement.

4.8.1 Current Queensland situation

Existing policy

The Department's Inclusive Education Statement states that:

"it is committed to all students with disability being supported through an education system that values, celebrates and responds positively to diversity among its students, families, staff and community members".¹³⁰

Further, the policy acknowledges that school communities must create and sustain supportive environments where all students feel a sense of belonging and that:

"... inclusive education means that every day in every classroom, every state school student is learning and achieving in a safe, supportive, inclusive and disciplined learning environment".¹³¹

¹³⁰ Department of Education and Training (2016a)

¹³¹ Department of Education and Training, (2016a)

In addition to the Inclusive Education Statement, the Department uses the Parent and Community Engagement Framework to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education.

To further support the policies on inclusive education, the Department implemented the Quality Schools, Inclusive Leaders program as part of the *MSSD*. This program aimed to bring about cultural change at the school level.

As part of its Leadership capability development program, the Department has developed a reference guide to principals, *Creating a culture of inclusion*. This outlines broad principles behind an inclusive culture and referred school leaders to references relating to organisational culture change more broadly.

School commitment to inclusion

As demonstrated by the above policies, the Department signals a culture of inclusion – however, the extent to which this culture of inclusion is fostered and promoted by the broader education community is less certain. The case study below highlights one example of regional leadership in establishing expectations of students with disability, which was subsequently observed across multiple schools visited within that region.

Case Study 4-3: Regional leadership in disability messaging

Of three schools visited within one region in Queensland, two noted that the current regional director had a “large focus on disability. It was described to the review team that in every newsletter there was something about disability. Principals within the region were expected to know the needs and adjustments of each students, and the message sent out by the region was that (inclusive education) is for everyone in every school.

The majority of state schools across Queensland that engaged with this review shared a commitment towards improving outcomes for students with disability, and do endeavour to do this. This was evident through some of the following examples:

- Teachers dedicating their own time to researching and learning about how to best make adjustment for the students in their class.
- Schools that implemented in-depth transition programs, collaborating between principals and teachers at different schools to smooth the transition from primary school to secondary school.
- Teacher aides undertaking additional qualifications and PD at their own time and expense.
- Schools networking within the community to find appropriate post-school options for students with disability.
- Statements made by parents, indicating that schools had achieved outcomes with their child that they would never have thought possible.

Consultations revealed that teachers at the majority of schools visited showed positive attitudes towards their students, with some considering the education of students with disability the most rewarding aspects of their careers.

Indicators which were identified by this review as positive attitudes towards students with disability during consultations were:

- Positive, student-first language used to describe the challenges and benefits of provision for students with disability.
- High aspirations for students with disability and their potential achievements.
- An acknowledgement that inclusive education is a culture not just a policy and is for the benefit of all students.

When asked about the benefits of teaching students with disability, many respondents noted that education of students with disability was among the most rewarding aspects of their profession:

"Seeing students learn and grow over the years at high school; increase in independence/ being able to self-advocate; knowing each student very well so as to be able to support them emotionally, behaviourally, socially, functionally, and in academic aspects of education." - HOSES

Many teachers also acknowledged what educating students with disability had to offer themselves, professionally:

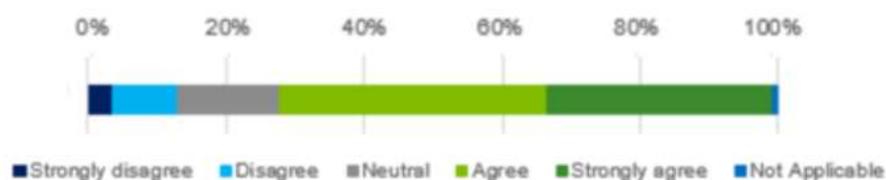
"The challenges are significant and I believe the work I have done to meet them has greatly extended my knowledge and made me a better teacher." - Classroom teacher

Analysis of survey results found that 95% of the principals surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their school provides a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students. However, the same results showed that 72% of principals (excluding 'neutral' responses) agreed or strongly agreed that managing and teaching students with disability affects the learning outcomes of students without disability. Examples of negative indicators included bullying (by students and teachers) – teachers berating students with disability was highlighted in parent consultations, but at a much lower rate than bullying from other students.

Culture of aspiration

The survey showed that school staff have varying ideas, aspirations and outcomes for students with disability. As outlined in Chart 4.10, over 70% of teachers responding to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that their school had high expectations of students with disability.

Chart 4.10 Agreement of teachers to high expectations of students with disability (n=1,323)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey

In some instances, when asked about their expectations for outcomes for students with disability, teachers outlined that their expectations were broadly in line with those of the Melbourne Declaration:

"(Desired outcomes of school education for students with disability are) students who can function, to the best of their capacity, as citizens of our community." - Classroom teacher

Many submissions highlighted the need for these expectations to be made consistent with students' *potential* and *ability* – or made reference to students without disability. 9% of responses referred to a student's potential when discussing goals and aspirations for students with disability – although this is a common component of education discourse and cannot be attributed to their disability status.

"(Outcomes of school education for students with disability are to) give the students with disability the maximum opportunities to learn while not disadvantaging those students without a disability." - Classroom teacher

Related to this, some teachers benchmarked desired outcomes to adjusted expectations.

"(Desired outcomes of school education for students with disability are) for students with disability to achieve realistic goals that they and the school have set." – Classroom teacher

Some staff indicated outcomes should be more focused on life skills, communication skills and social ability; and less on academic ability. The phrase "life skills" appeared in an additional 2% of teacher responses when asked about desired outcomes:

[When asked what they would like to see different in education for students with disability] *"Outcomes specifically designed to support a child's positive, independent inclusion in society rather than placing the emphasis on meaningless academic goals. No point teaching a child with severe special needs how to label the parts of a butterfly or about history of Australia if they can't even hold a conversation."* – Classroom teacher

"The greatest challenge for me is to adjust and apply (Curriculum 2 Class) in the classroom. The big part of the curriculum is not suitable for students with special needs and is not relevant to their needs and the life after school." – Classroom teacher

Regardless of how desired outcomes have been articulated, all responses show that the vast majority of the education community who have given their time and insight feel committed to achieving outcomes for students with disability. There is an immense opportunity for the Department to harness this commitment and drive it towards a shared vision for students with disability.

This sentiment was echoed in consultations with schools conducted throughout this review, the most notable of which gave an example of how the school's culture had been reformed into one that was more inclusive and celebrated diversity following the appointment of a new principal.

Case Study 4-4: A transition to a fully inclusive school

The problem

- The school in question previously educated students with disability in a completely segregated environment.
- The catalyst for change was the new principal at the school, who had previously completed QuSIL stage 2 training – and had up until then taught at a remote school which wasn't resourced for an SEP.

The change

- Having undertaken QuSIL training, the principal had a strong understanding of the school's requirements under the DSE. They appointed someone to undertake a review of inclusive practice at the school and found breaches that would leave the school exposed to litigation.
- This provided the evidence to make an announcement that the school would transition to a fully inclusive model the following year.

The challenges

- The principal announced the change and parents and carers of children without disabilities expressed upset that these kids would be in their classes.
- Parents and carers of children with disability were upset that their children would no longer be educated within a segregated SEP.
- Staff who have been around a lot longer are more challenged and challenging. This year – the school has increased support for staff

The benefits

- The school saw an increase in the number of students with disability meeting National Minimum Standards.
- Parents and carers of students with disability who had protested the change were satisfied – one year down the track – with the progress their children had made.
- The funding from the SEP was able to be diverted into additional teachers, who had training in special education and were a flexible resource to provide relief, support, advice and training to teachers of all year levels.

Culture

- The educational community in Queensland is committed to outcomes for students with disability, however not all schools do not universally display the characteristics which are indicative of a supportive culture that values inclusion and cultivates high standards of achievement.

Nomenclature

Nomenclature used within schools makes it apparent that all staff within schools, for the most part, strive to use positive, people-first language to describe students with disability. Across Queensland, language used throughout the system retains the vernacular of special education. Special education and inclusive education are conflated or applied as synonyms. Nomenclatures and work positions and their descriptions reflect this

ambiguity, with the positioning of SEPs, and Heads of Special Education Services, within schools. One school visited by the review team had revised the title of the position of the HOSSES, to Head of Inclusion, following a move at that school to adopt a fully inclusive model of classroom practice.

Segregated and regular provisions of school education were simultaneously described as special and inclusive across different stakeholder groups. The term *special* has longstanding negative social connotations with regard to people with disability, and the continuing use of the term *special* within schooling policy is used to describe segregated education settings.

Bullying

This review heard from a range of stakeholders on the particular issue of bullying of students with disability, with high levels of concern expressed by many parents and some students. This is an issue all education systems across Australia struggle with, and Queensland has made efforts to address this at a broader policy level. Queensland is the lead jurisdiction for the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group, which collects and distributes evidence-based information and advice on bullying, harassment and violence for Australian teachers, parents and students. This includes the *Bullying. No Way!* website which includes the latest evidence-based information, resources, lesson plans and effective strategies for schools to use. Queensland has taken proactive steps to drive a culture of positive relationships through its leadership (on behalf of all Australian jurisdictions) of the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.

4.8.2 Moving towards more effective policy

Over time, as the system evolves to better encourage the education community to set high expectations for students with disability, and provides practitioners with the tools to achieve this, culture will change naturally and the system will move towards views of students with disability which are aligned to high expectations expected from an international perspective.

However, culture can be systematically addressed by the Department through measurement and assessment – followed by a sustained pathway to change. This will help to build upon the strong commitment of staff to outcomes for students with disability, which was identified earlier.

Culture change literature has highlighted the circular relationship between an organisation's culture and the behaviours which take place throughout an organisation. Implementing a strategy which actively seeks to change those behaviours can have positive effects on the culture throughout the organisation.

This review has not provided a detailed review of the culture change literature as it relates to schooling systems, however does note that this is an area the system can investigate as a way to drive positive attitudes and expectations for students with disability at all levels. Research conducted by Deloitte Human Capital has highlighted a number of areas which are necessary to improve the culture across a system:

- Ensure the leaders in the system or organisation are personally leading culture change
- Conduct sufficient internal communications
- Ensure that the message is contagious and can reach the tipping point of acceptance across the organisation.¹³²

As such, the Department has an opportunity to provide greater leadership to drive improvements in inclusion and outcomes for students with disability. Although culture change will be a slow process, signals and priorities sent by the Department can have

¹³² Deloitte Human Capital, documents not publicly available

important flow on effects in all the areas discussed in this report. The Department should conduct a culture assessment and implement a culture change strategy to reform perceptions and expectations of students with disability throughout the education community.

This strategy should ideally be implemented with a monitoring and evaluation framework, supported by measures of engagement and wellbeing at the school and system level.

A more inclusive schools culture will aid in improving relationships *between* students. This culture change strategy should include consideration of how positive and respectful relationships at the school level can be developed and strengthened. The sector needs to ensure that a positive culture supporting students with disability within an inclusive environment is promoted throughout all state schools. The Department should continue to focus its efforts on reducing bullying through participation in existing Queensland and national initiatives.

Nomenclature

The Department can drive an adoption of improved language through its role in determining the titles of programs, position descriptions, and in promoting the use of non-discriminatory, disability preferred language. This review advocates changes of titles such as HOSES. Reflection on the use of these terms will be beneficial if conducted as part of a culture review and development of a strategy.

Recommendation 4-8: Culture change strategy

- The Department should conduct a culture assessment and implement a culture change strategy to reform perceptions and expectations of students with disability throughout the education community.
 - This culture change strategy should include a review of language included within schools, including position descriptions and nomenclature.
 - This should be considered in conjunction with recommendations relating to workforce strategy. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

This section (4) has examined the **policy settings** which sit at the level of the schooling system in reference to the benchmark established in Section 3. It has reviewed the current Queensland situation and presented recommendations for moving towards a policy environment which further emulates the features of leading schooling systems and actively supports the improvement of outcomes for students with disability in the context of a policy framework geared toward maximising outcomes for *all* students.

The next section (5) reflects on the **current state of practice** at the school level throughout Queensland state schools, in reference to the factors and benchmarks established in Section 3.

5 Effective practice



This section provides review findings and recommendations regarding the practice environment in Queensland state schools as it relates to students with disability. This review has sought to establish, for each practice element outlined in Section 3.3 and using evidence gathered throughout this review, the extent to which effective practice can be considered to currently take place throughout the Queensland state schooling sector. This is followed by a discussion outlining steps toward more effective practice.

As the methodology overview provided in the Introduction to this report notes, this review has not been informed by an audit of practice; but rather by administrative and student outcomes data and based on evidence and information collected from a representative sample of Queensland state schools.

It is important to note that the discussion in this section is focused on maximising opportunities for improvement in education practice for students with disability. Many of the challenges discussed are common across other jurisdictions, and are by no means unique to the Queensland state schooling sector.

This review has found that the policies and materials which exist in this area are typically of a high quality and provide guidance to teachers which is broadly in line with established leading standards set out in Section 3.3. Translating these materials and policies into practice is a challenge which all education jurisdictions across Australia face. This review identifies the means through which this challenge can be most effectively addressed.

5.1 Curriculum and pedagogy

Many students with disability are able to achieve results commensurate with their peers, as long as the necessary adjustments are made to the way in which they are taught and assessed.¹³³ A whole school approach to teaching and learning is intended to build the capacity of the school to meet the needs of every student. In some instances, individual adjustments are made for students with specific needs. This section reviews whole-of-school support applicable across the school system, as well as the individual adjustments which are provided to students with disability.

¹³³ ACARA, Students with Disability

5.1.1 Current Queensland situation

Whole school support

The P-12 CARF is a set of requirements for Queensland state schools concerning curriculum provision, assessment and reporting to parents, which states that all students are entitled to access rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and set in age-equivalent learning contexts. The P-12 CARF requires schools to provide for students with additional support needs, students with disability, and provide individual adjustments for students who require a different year level curriculum.

As part of the P-12 CARF, Queensland's current policy requires all schools to construct a pedagogical framework at the school level.¹³⁴ The P-12 CARF lists requirements relating to the delivery of age-appropriate curriculum, adjustments for students with special learning needs and disability, and the development of a pedagogical framework. Under this policy, it is intended that the majority of students with disability can access the required curriculum and achievement standards for their year-level or age cohort as a result of quality whole school planning, and reasonable adjustments made to teaching, learning and assessment. The Department's whole school approach directs support to different levels of student need, according to a model similar to RTI, and has also adopted the principles of UDL in its planning.

The whole school approach has been designed to support the delivery of Australian Curriculum to students with disability. Over recent years, there has been an increase in both participation and performance in Queensland curriculum testing for students with an EAP-recognised disability. Since 2012, Queensland has used the Australian Curriculum. In addition to the materials and guidance offered by ACARA on tailoring the delivery of Australian Curriculum to students with disability, the system offers a range of resources relating to whole school support for its own program, Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C). The participation of students with an EAP-recognised disability in A to E testing has increased by 17 percentage points since 2011 to rest at 83% in 2015. At the same time, the measured performance on the A to E scale has increased – with the proportion of students with an EAP-recognised disability receiving A and B scores increasing, and proportion scoring D and E decreasing.

Throughout consultations, this review tested the implementation of a whole school approach across Queensland state schools. During these consultations with schools, at least six schools clearly articulated that they use a **whole school approach** to inclusion. Examples of this included a whole school approach to behaviour management and building respectful relationships between all staff and students. When asked about the key adjustments offered within schools, almost 50% of survey respondents noted that curriculum was modified, with some specifically mentioning C2C resources for students with disability and the adoption of a whole school approach in the school.

Across consultations, classroom adjustments were highlighted as a key challenge to teaching students with disability. Adjustments were stated to include:

- Assignment of time with teacher aides (discussed with at least half of schools in consultations)
- Withdrawing students for one-to-one time with aides or specialists (discussed with at least six schools)
- Using a SEP, such as an entirely separate class to the mainstream school, or other focus groups or classes where students with disability are withdrawn
- Use of individual plans including but not limited to: ICPs, individual learning plans, and behaviour plans (discussed with at least 15 schools).

¹³⁴ Department of Education and Training, Pedagogical Framework,

Teacher survey respondents identified the main challenges of differentiation as the lack of teacher capability to differentiate and the amount of time needed for preparation:

- Of responses to the question, *what has been the greatest challenge for you in teaching students with disability*, 19 contained reference to time being an issue, and 14 contained a reference to skills – with 5 of those outlining skills in differentiation as a key learning gap.

Respondents who stated they make necessary adjustments also noted that this practice was not consistent across the school, with some teachers under the impression that adjustments were the responsibility of the SEP staff.

Whole school planning and differentiation

- The majority of students with disability can access the required curriculum and achievement standards, with some accessing this at a different year level.
- Teachers would particularly like more support in addressing the challenges of differentiation and preparation time.

Individual adjustments

It is noted in guidance provided by the Department around a whole school approach that a small number of students with disability may also require adjustments to year-level expectations involving learning at a lower or higher year-level across some or for all learning areas. Where students with disability require adjustments to year-level expectations, teachers must develop an ICP with parents and carers, to adjust the learning focus and determine the learning expectations.¹³⁵

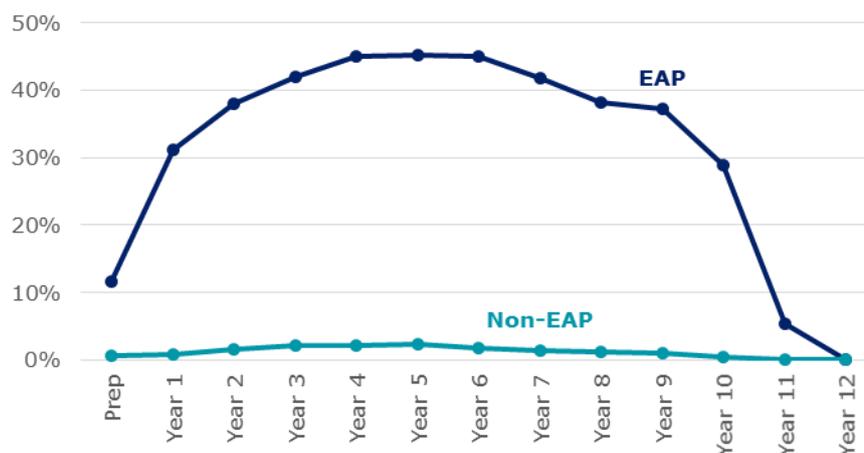
ICPs are intended to be an additional adjustment for some students, and not all students with disability will (or should) be subject to these plans.

A recent increase in curriculum participation and outcomes for students with disability has corresponded with the introduction of ICPs. ICPs are used for both students with an EAP-recognised disability (60% of all ICPs) and other students (40% of all ICPs). In 2015, 35% of students with an EAP-recognised disability were assigned an ICP in English in 2015 – representing approximately 2% of all students.

In 2015, ICP use was at its highest in the middle years of schooling, and declines in year 10. ICPs are currently developed around the Australian Curriculum, and as Queensland state schools do not use the Australian Curriculum in Years 11 and 12, there is no use of ICPs in these years.

¹³⁵ Department of Education and Training, (n.d.). Every student succeeding State Schools Strategy 2016–2020

Chart 5.1 Incidence of ICPs, by academic year (2015)



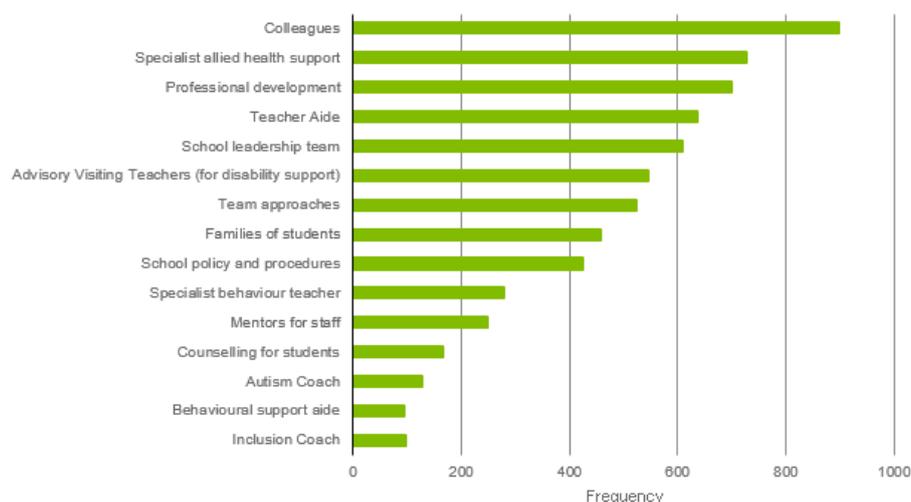
Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

The introduction of ICPs is based on international experience and is a means to introduce the Australian Curriculum to students unable to study at the same level of their peers for a particular learning area i.e. English. It will be important for the system to periodically review the placement of ICPs, however. Reviews are necessary as research also shows that ICPs or IEPs (Individual Education Plans) may easily become a ritual of compliance with limited educational benefit. They are not intended to be a substitute for delivery of age-appropriate curriculum where this is possible within a whole school approach to teaching and learning. As an example, within the United States, ESSA, which also allows individual education plans for students with disability below the level being studied by students of the same age, limits the proportion of allowed individual plans within each jurisdiction to 1% of total enrolments (with exceptions allowed).

During consultations, the review team asked teachers to reflect on adjustments they had provided students, and the extent to which these were appropriate or adequate. At half of the 32 schools visited, teachers reported providing adequate adjustments for students with disability. It was noted that some were unsure if they were adjusting sufficiently or excessively. Many teachers expressed that despite being fully committed to inclusive education and wanting to do the best job they could, they were missing key skills and were under-resourced to be able to do so.

Parent and teacher responses to the review survey provide insight into the aggregated experiences across the state. When asked what support they used to provide adjustments for students with disability, teachers most frequently identified their colleagues (13.8%), specialist support (11.1%), PD (10.7%) and teacher aides (9.8%). The inclusion and autism coaches – two relatively new positions within the Department – were cited relatively infrequently (Figure 5.1).

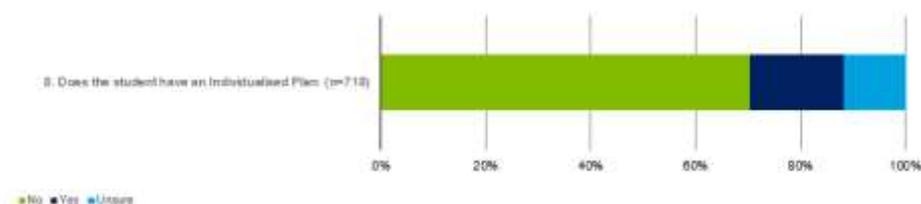
Figure 5.1 : Have you received support from any of the following in the last 12 months that helped you effectively teach students with a diagnosed disability? (n=1,266)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey

The survey sought to establish the proportion of parents whose child had an individualised plan. Given the phrasing of this question this could, in theory, be interpreted as any type of individual plan, and not specifically a curriculum plan. 70% of parents responding to this survey indicated that they did not (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 : Use of individual learning plan



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey

ICPs were generally recognised as an effective tool for differentiation and inclusion in the classroom, and criticism received generally related to administrative burden and to their applicability of the Australian curriculum more broadly:

- The criticisms among mainstream schools were predominantly based on the additional preparation time required for multiple ICPs in one class. This concern is echoed by the Queensland Teachers Union in a position statement on differentiation and planning for individual students.¹³⁶
- Only two special schools criticised the *inflexibility* of ICPs. These criticisms were based on the academic focus of the Australian Curriculum more broadly, and the inability to reflect progress for students that would never move up a level – not necessarily the suitability or otherwise of the tool.
 - *The big part of the curriculum is not suitable for students with special needs and is not relevant to their needs and the life after school.* (Special school teacher)
- This criticism appears to reflect the view that the Australian Curriculum is not appropriate for some students with disability.

¹³⁶ QTU, (2015)

Use of ICPs

- In Queensland, ICPs are used for both students with an EAP-recognised disability (60% of all ICPs) and other students (40% of all ICPs) and their use has increased across both groups since 2011.
- ICPs are generally recognised as an effective tool for differentiation and inclusion in the classroom, however they are not intended to be a substitute for teaching and learning differentiation of the appropriate curriculum.

The review team met with students and directly discussed their needs within a schooling context. These students were articulate in expressing elements of their learning environments which suited their needs. These views were reflected in student surveys with written responses including:

[When asked what they liked about school] *"(I like) Learning new things, talking to friends. Having discussions/debates about a subject as a class, where we each put forward questions and opinions."*

[When asked how the school could be improved] *"Let me have a space to go to when I'm feeling frustrated, and stop (the teacher) yelling and being mean to me. She's not mean to the other kids."*

"I don't like how teachers put so much pressure on me to get A's and when I don't get a high mark they make me feel guilty or ask me to study more even if I have studied a lot."

5.1.2 Moving towards more effective practice

The current P-12 CARF in support of Queensland schools is supportive of a whole school approach. This approach, within the Queensland context, has built on best-practice models outlined throughout this report including UDL and RTI.

There are opportunities for further improvements in the adoption of the whole school approach, and the delivery of education within classrooms according to the P-12 CARF. Specifically, there is potential for resources currently produced to advise on development and delivery of a pedagogical framework to be revised to use similar language to the resources produced under the whole school approach.

In addition, further support is required for principals to apply centrally distributed materials to the development of school pedagogical frameworks and to support teachers to learn and apply the principles of inclusive education.

This review noted examples of a range of practice, varying in quality, in this regard across Queensland state schools. A move towards more consistent practice will:

- Build on the elements of the policy environment for students with disability as they relate to culture (Section 4.8) and system governance (Section 4.7), to ensure that all schools receive the message that inclusive education is everyone's business
- Integrate consideration of disaggregated outcomes relating to students with disability into school level headline indicators, to ensure progress is measurable and outcomes-focused (Section 4.3)
- Build these skills into the Department's broader workforce capacity and capability strategy (Section 5.4)
- Ensure that school staff have access to evidence based resources relating to this practice and access to information about leading contemporary practice in the Queensland context (Section 4.4), and that they discuss practices to support students with disability with each other (Section 5.6)

- Enhance the ability of principals and school leadership teams to understand and apply the Department's P-12 CARF and whole school support policy, and integrate these into a school-level pedagogical framework (Section 5.1)
- Enhance the educational experiences of all students – not just students with a verified disability.

Recommendation 5-1: Curriculum and pedagogy

- The implementation of the P-12 CARF should be aided through a revision of the materials and guidance associated with teaching and learning. The guide to developing a pedagogical framework at the school level should be explicitly linked to the P-12 CARF and whole school approach resources offered by the Department. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The use of Individual Curriculum Plans should be incorporated into system-wide monitoring and data analysis, and monitoring of their use should aim to ensure schools are working towards modifying age-appropriate curriculum for delivery in classrooms. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

5.2 Behaviour management

Punishing challenging behaviours, without a proactive support system, is associated with increases in aggression, vandalism, truancy, and disengagement.¹³⁷ Strategies to both reduce and manage the incidence of challenging behaviour in schools are outlined below.

5.2.1 Current Queensland situation

Current behaviour management framework

Every school must create a Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, which outlines the school's expectations in relation to student behaviour, and the school-level policy relating to behaviour management.

The Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment (SSDSE) procedure outlines the strategies which a school has available in response to behaviours. The SSDSE are a system-wide set of policies relating to:

- Short (1-10 day) and long (11-20 day) suspensions
- Exclusion (from certain schools or all Queensland state schools), use of time out (separating a student from their regular class or routine) as a proactive strategy as well as a behaviour management strategy
- Use of unplanned and planned Physical Restraint, used as an immediate or emergency response or as part of a student's individual plan, including prevention of self-harming behaviours
- Community Service Interventions and Discipline Improvement Plans.

PBL

The Department supports PBL as a framework to improve student behaviour, engagement and achievement. In order to implement PBL, schools must nominate to the region and conduct preparations, including a vote of support from staff and the nomination of a PBL leadership team. Following nomination, schools are provided with the resources required to implement a PBL framework, and offered training in Tier 1 of PBL. In PBL, coaching plays a very important role by building internal capability (within the school and region) to prevent many of the problems associated with training in isolation. Individuals who

¹³⁷ Sprague, (2012)

provide coaching deliver a unique and important support service to school teams and teachers as they work to implement PBL. Regional PBL Coordinators provide direct coaching support to schools, and coordinate internal coaching support across regions - where schools identify an internal coach who is trained and receives ongoing support from regional PBL coordinators.

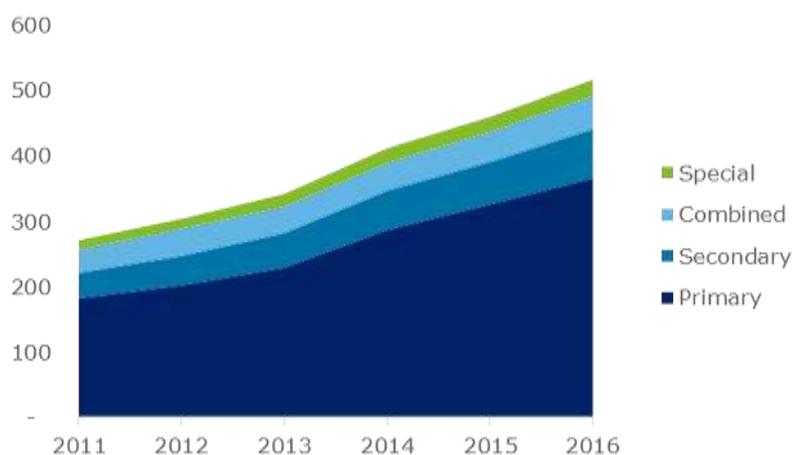
The following observations relating to PBL implementation have been noted by the review team:

- Information is available through the central office including participating schools and the years commenced, with potential for additional systemic data to be collected. As has been noted elsewhere in the report, there is an opportunity to expand the capability of school leaders to build strong cultures within schools with greater system support.
- Schools are able to access support, with behaviour coaches positioned throughout the regions to assist in the use of PBL in schools, and the Department has provided assistance to hundreds of schools in this regard. There could be further explicit ongoing coaching or monitoring implemented as part of the initiative.

Consultations with stakeholders within the central office and from disability advocacy groups highlighted PBL as an important tool in promoting inclusion and effective learning for students with disability. It is also considered to be an important tool in reducing the incidence of the use of restrictive practices. This is confirmed by the experience of schools, with at least one special school explaining to this review how the implementation of the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support program had helped reduce instances of complex behaviours interrupting classes, made for a calmer and more positive school environment with very limited use of restrictive practices, in only the most exceptional of circumstances.

Administrative data shows that 42% of Queensland state schools have received training for PBL. From 2011 to 2016, PBL has grown by approximately 14% per year across all school types. While the rate of adoption is lowest among secondary schools, it has still reached 30% (Chart 5.2).

Chart 5.2 Participation in PBL training, by school setting (2011-2016)



Note: In total, 460 schools have received PBL training, by 2016. This reflects 35% of all enrolments, and 43% of all EAP enrolments. Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

Table 5.1 Growth rate in PBL participation, by school setting (2011-16)

School setting	Average annual growth rate	Participation rate (by 2016)
Special	13%	54%
Combined	7%	32%
Secondary	14%	30%
Primary	15%	39%

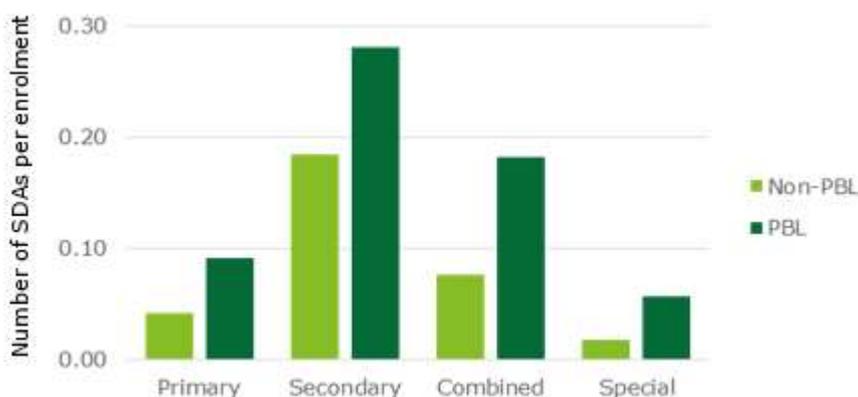
Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

It was not possible, using the available data, to attribute a difference in behavioural outcomes to participation in the PBL initiative. PBL schools had an overall higher incidence of use of SDA (Chart 5.3). This could be indicative of a range of impacts:

- A greater willingness of schools with more behavioural problems to sign up to the program
- Initial increase in SDAs following introduction of clear expectations and consistent implementation of consequences
- The socio-economic status of schools
- Poor fidelity of implementation.

Separate analysis by the Department has shown that there is no significant difference in the use of SDAs across PBL and non-PBL schools when school-level characteristics have been controlled for. As is outlined in Section 4.4, there is little evaluation of the initiative at present – which makes it difficult to establish whether the lack of impact is due to the initiative itself, or its implementation to date.

Chart 5.3 SDA rate per enrolment, by school setting (2015)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

A key goal of these policies is to improve student learning outcomes, quality of life and active participation in their communities. PBL is also used with the intention that it would reduce or completely eliminate the use of restrictive practices.

Additional behaviour policies and initiatives

Through MSSD, the Department (in partnership with Dr Loretta Giorcelli) developed online learning modules that are available to all principals and teachers. One module, Understanding and Supporting Behaviour, is specifically aimed at providing participants with an understanding of Positive Behaviour Support and practices that support the learning, behaviour management and inclusion of all students.¹³⁸

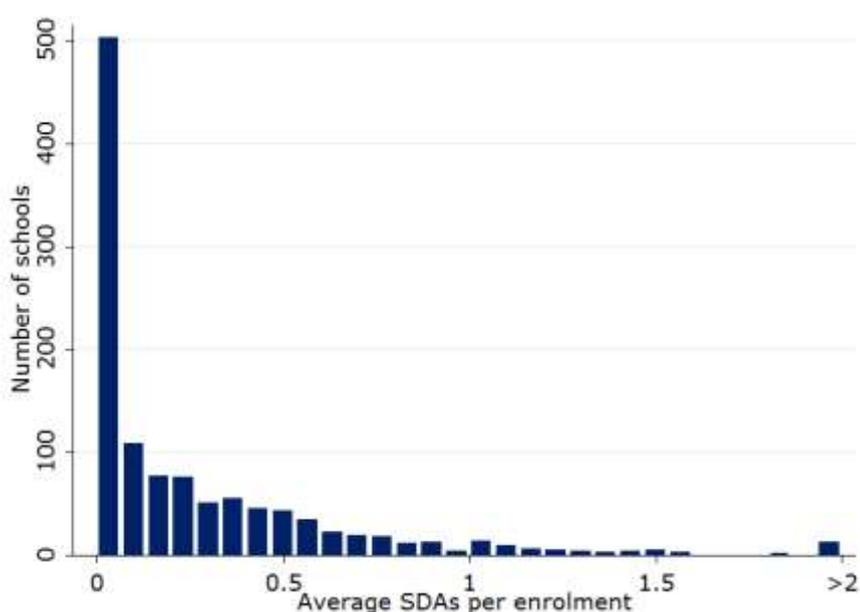
¹³⁸ Queensland Government, (2014)

The Learning and Wellbeing Framework guides schools in the delivery of a positive working environment, through connecting the learning environment, curriculum and pedagogy, policies and procedures and partnerships.

Use of SDA

SDA refers to the application of suspension, exclusion or cancellation of enrolment of students from schools due to instances of behaviour, in line with the school’s Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students. The vast majority of schools use no or very few SDAs. However, a small number of schools have high rates of SDAs – greater than 1 per enrolment, on average, across the school’s population of students with an EAP-recognised disability (Chart 5.4).

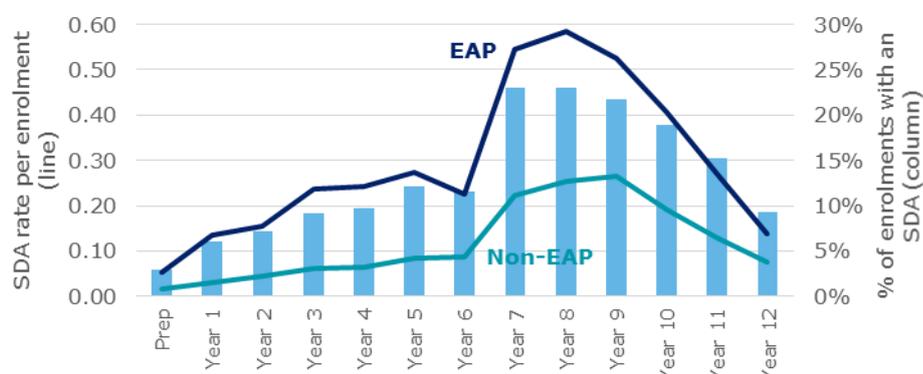
Chart 5.4 Distribution of SDAs, EAP only (2015)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

The use of SDAs is considerably higher in secondary schools, with a marked increase between Year 6 and 7 for all students (Chart 5.5). The use of SDAs is consistently higher for students with an EAP-recognised disability. Both the incidence of SDA and the proportion of students who receive an SDA increases in secondary school settings. The reasons for this are varied, but academics consulted through this review noted that the environment in secondary schools is far more complex compared to primary school settings, for students with disability, and this may lead to challenges relating to behaviour.

Chart 5.5 SDAs, by academic year (2015)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

Schools can suspend students for a maximum of 20 days. Suspensions may be given between 10 and 20 days if the incident is serious. Ten to 20 day suspensions may be appealed by the student, parent or their advocate.

Since 2011, the total use of SDAs has increased, particularly between 2014 and 2015 (Chart 5.6). In 2014, the maximum length of short suspensions (which can be instituted at the discretion of the principal) changed from up to five school days to up to 10 school days, which may be in part driving increasing SDA use.

Chart 5.6 Type of SDAs, students with an EAP-recognised disability (2011-15)



Source: Queensland Department of Education and Training administrative data

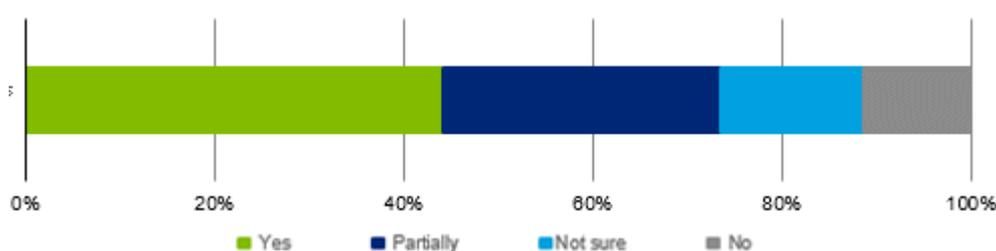
SDA

- Students with disability in Queensland state schools are more likely to be subject to SDAs than students without disability. This is greatest in secondary school. Average use of SDA among students with disability in Queensland has been consistently growing since 2011.

This review sought to establish the extent to which state schools adopted an approach which is reflective of a whole school approach to behaviour – and one which contextualised behaviour policy in relation to teaching and learning policy. Data analysed include adoption of PBL, the use of SDA, and the reported sentiments of teachers in relation to behaviour management.

Since 2009, under the DDA, it has been unlawful to discriminate against someone for behaviour which is a manifestation of a disability.¹³⁹ All Responsible Behaviour Plans for Students, which have been developed by the school and their community using the template issued by the Department, include an acknowledgement of the Act. And 72% of responding teachers reported their school's Responsible Behaviour Plans for Students partially or fully incorporated a provision for students with disability (Chart 5.7).

Chart 5.7 Does your school's Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students include provision for students with disability? (n=1,327)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey.

Of written responses to "what has been the greatest challenge for you in teaching students with disability", 29 teachers included a reference to student behaviour. Some responses which indicated teacher view of behaviour as a separate field of practice to teaching include:

- "Teaching students whose behaviour is getting in the way of learning."
- "I believe that the passive students miss out on some educational aspects due to high attention on behaviour management."
- "Their behaviour and the lack of parent responsibility for their child's education and behaviour."

Schools visited as part of this review provided varying justifications for the use of SDA. In one school, it was stated that they suspended, excluded or had part-time enrolments of students with disability due to an inability of the child to appropriately function within the school environment, or of the school to manage the student due to specific behaviours. In one school, the principal highlighted that the school instituted zero use of restrictive practice – and subsequently relied on SDAs as a way to manage aggressive behaviour in the school year.

29% of surveyed parents highlighted that their child was regularly sent out of the classroom for behavioural issues. Consultations allowed the review team to ask about the impact of this on carers, and one parent highlighted an experience where they were unable to work due to the frequency with which a school would send their child home.

A consultation with an academic presently undertaking research in this area, indicated that teachers are often untrained in behaviour management, in particular the ability to recognise the antecedents to problem behaviours and respond to these. There is limited understanding of the relationship between pedagogy, curriculum, school culture and

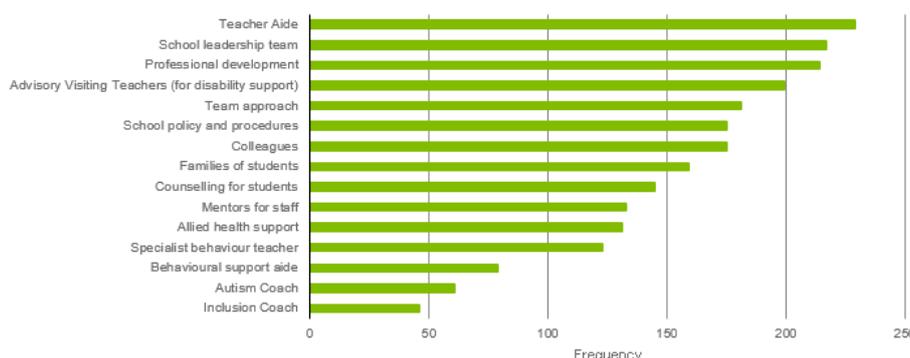
¹³⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission (2009), Improved rights protection for people with disability (2009). This amendment followed the dissenting opinion of Justice Kirby in *Purvis v New South Wales* (2002)

problem behaviour. There is also a need for people to understand when difficult behaviour may be a manifestation of a child’s impairment that may be altered through environmental adjustments.

Support for severe and complex cases in Queensland is provided through the Autism Hub. Central office stakeholders reported the support provided by the Autism Hub, in particular case management support for complex behaviour management cases, to be highly effective and beneficial both for students but also increasing the capability of staff. The predominant concern with the model of support provided by the Autism Hub was that it is only available for students with autism. Like the inclusion coaches, access to support through the Autism Hub was also generally limited to support for educator and parents of students with autism.

The extent to which schools reported being linked in with other service providers in the community varied throughout consultations - 200 out of 250 surveyed principals reported providing advisory visiting teacher support to classroom teachers, and 130 reported providing Allied Health support. Instances were reported of formalised processes and groups meeting regularly to discuss high risk students, with participants including the school (guidance officers and HOSES), local social services providers such as Anglicare or Berry St, and law enforcement, among others.

Chart 5.8 : Provision of support to staff in order to help them manage and effectively teach students with disability? (n=250)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey.

Other schools acted as a referral service, indicating to parents where and how to access more support in the community.

PBL

- SWPBS is widely regarded as an effective practice in providing a framework for schools to measure, monitor and improve behaviour (Section 3.3.2).
- Existing data cannot be used to establish the effectiveness of PBL at reducing the overall use of SDA in Queensland schools.

5.2.2 Moving towards more effective practice

The weight of international evidence supporting SWPBS is substantial (noting that additional evidence is required within the Australian context). While there is little evidence that the policy has had any impact on behavioural outcomes in Queensland schools, this is in part due to the minimal line of sight associated with the implementation of the policy, in light of the discussion in Section 4.4. There is sufficient justification for supporting a trial of SWPBS, whether branded as PBL or something else, with

commensurate resourcing and support from the central office to implement this with fidelity.

SDAs are currently the most visible indicator of behaviour at a system level, and reflects a negative outcome for students when implemented. There should be a focus on improving the accountability of the use of SDA as a tool to manage complex and challenging behaviours.

Recommendation 5-2: Behaviour management and policy

- The Department should ensure that all schools articulate their Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students in conjunction with a school-wide policy that incorporates differentiation in teaching and learning. The Department should review its current suite of behaviour management policies, including the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, to drive the adoption of these principles among schools into the future. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
 - One potential model for this, which is currently already in place across Queensland schools, is PBL. The Department should trial the implementation of PBL with strict implementation fidelity.
- The Department should incorporate disaggregated use of SDA data for students with and without disability into headline measures of outcomes for schools, regions and the system as a whole. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

5.3 Restrictive practices

As Section 3.3.3 outlines, restrictive practice, or restraint, is a technique that exists for use in response to the most extreme and challenging cases of behaviour in order to prevent imminent harm to students and staff. Restrictive practice policy must seek to install it as a measure of last resort and schools must be given the greatest possible clarity regarding the practical circumstances under which its use is justified. Mechanisms must then be in place to ensure its use accords with these principles.

5.3.1 Current Queensland situation

Queensland's existing policy around restrictive practice is defined in SSDSE. It is similar to policies in other Australian jurisdictions, noting that restrictive practices should be used only as a practice of last resort. Importantly, SSDSE notes that incident reports must be completed when school staff apply physical interventions towards students, including restraint, and that individual behaviour plans within Queensland allow for planned use of restrictive practice.

Principals are not responsible for determining a policy in relation to the use of restrictive practice at the school level, although they are responsible for outlining Department policy within the school's Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students, and approving the use of restrictive practice in children's individual behaviour plans.

The use of restrictive practice must be followed up with an incident report, with different methods of accountability applied across regions. While, in principle, data is collected on all uses of restrictive practice, there is some potential for the system to compile and review this information at a regional and central level. Planned use of restrictive practice, through an individual behaviour plan, does not require an incident report, although the plans must be provided to the regional office.

The state schooling sector leadership is cognisant of the issues relating to restrictive practice and has implemented policies designed to reduce and manage their use. The PBL

initiative is an attempt to implement the type of school and classroom level adjustments necessary to control problem behaviours before they require use of restrictive practice.

To further facilitate the reduction of the use of restrictive practices, the Department has piloted the 'Reducing Restrictive Practices Project'. This includes the use of Functional Behaviour Assessments (FBA) for the assessment and treatment of problem behaviour. The project aims to reduce or eliminate the use of restrictive practices in the pilot PBL schools and is currently undergoing evaluation.

The use of restrictive practices in Queensland can have significant legal consequences for teachers and schools. If a complaint is raised about a teacher, this can result in an investigation by the Ethical Standards area within the Department. As noted in a consultation with an academic specialising in the use of restrictive practice, and in the Shaddock Review, depending on the severity of the incident it would be possible for a teacher to be charged with assault, ending their career if found guilty.

Employers, including schools, have a duty to protect the safety of staff and others in the workplace, through appropriate risk management. Employers must not allow staff to be subjected to violence without taking measures to minimise this risk.¹⁴⁰

It was raised as a concern in multiple consultations, including with an academic specialising in the use of restrictive practice, and the Queensland Teachers' Union, that there is currently a mismatch between the intent of inclusive education and the responsibility that schools hold for the workplace safety of their employees. The argument was made that because teachers lack the skills to deal with complex behaviours displayed by students with disability, they may put their own safety in danger by not acting to control the student, due to concern regarding potential legal ramifications or even media attention.

The teachers at one school highlighted the perceived risks of working with students who at times, exhibit complex and challenging behaviours. Some of the teachers have had substantial time off work due to injuries sustained while working with students, with some teachers stating they had filed for multiple workers compensation claims over the years.

The survey and school consultations revealed that restrictive practices are used in a range of contexts and for a range of reasons both related and unrelated to physical safety.

The parent survey revealed that approximately one in four parents and carers believed that their child had been subjected to restraint at school. 15% of the sample stated that they were not sure whether their child had been restrained and 60% indicated restrictive practices had not been used on their child. This response did not vary significantly by schooling context (primary, secondary or special).¹⁴¹

This is consistent with findings by a survey conducted by CYDA (307 respondents in Queensland) which found that 20% of survey respondents in Queensland reported having experienced restraint at school, and that 20% of respondents reported the students experiencing seclusion at school. The review team heard one instance (from school staff) of use of restrictive practice where students were placed into a locked room, under supervision, and one instance (from parents and carers) where a student had been placed into an enclosed, locked yard. A survey of student experiences conducted by CYDA highlighted three cases where parents and carers identified their children had been placed in isolated, locked areas.

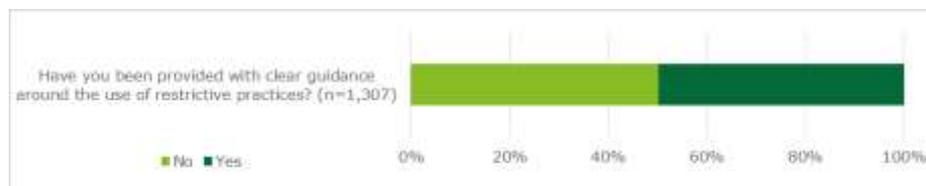
The teacher/support staff survey conducted by Deloitte Access Economics for this review revealed that only half of the respondents felt they had clarity around restrictive practices (Chart 5.9). In written survey responses, principals and teachers indicated that they

¹⁴⁰ Shaddock et al, (2015)

¹⁴¹ Restrictive practices included containment, seclusion and/or mechanical or chemical restraint

require explicit and clear guidance on what restrictive practice is, how it can be used and a practical explanation on the scenarios that may or may not require its use.

Chart 5.9 Provision of advice on restrictive practices to teachers



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey.

School consultations also demonstrated that there was a lack of consistent understanding regarding what constitutes a restrictive practice, and that they felt use of these techniques was a poorly defined area of present school practice. At least six schools made this point. Due to a lack of clarity around restrictive practices, school staff from at least one school said they were afraid to use physical restraint.

Clarity in policy around restrictive practice

- Teachers expressed uncertainty around their responsibilities and protections in regard to restrictive practice.
- Principals and teachers reported a desire for additional specificity in the guidance provided centrally.

Use of restrictive practice

- Though the precise frequency is unknown, schools across Queensland utilise both planned and unplanned restrictive practice. There is not a consistent method of accountability or follow-up relating to their use.

5.3.2 Moving toward more effective practice

The restrictive practices policy must seek to ensure these practices are only used as a measure of last resort when students or staff are at an imminent risk of harm, and schools must be given the greatest possible clarity regarding the practical circumstances under which its use is justified. To this end, some of the principles outlined in Section 3.3.3 could be more clearly established in the policy which is currently in place in Queensland. Specifically:

- The current policy around the actual use of restrictive practices is imprecise, leaving substantial room for interpretation by principals and school staff.
- The use of restrictive practice is governed by the Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment procedure – which is a collection of tools for managing discipline, rather than a policy encompassing whole school support and response to behaviours.
- Schools are required to create an incident report following any use of restrictive practice, however this information is not centrally collected or analysed.

Explicit standards are needed regarding the instances where restrictive practices are acceptable. Practical guidance around when restrictive practice should and should not be used could be produced by the central office, in conjunction with experts and representative groups. This guidance should be made public and accessible. There must also be a comprehensive record of the incidences where restrictive practices are used, and a process for monitoring and, where circumstances require, investigating their use.

The system should incorporate restrictive practice use into its ongoing data analysis, to identify trends and patterns relating to use in the Queensland context.

Given the provision for unplanned use of restrictive practice, the need for *planned* use of restrictive practice within individual behaviour plans must be questioned. Victoria is an example of a jurisdiction which does not allow planned use of restrictive practice. Regional offices are presently responsible for receiving and monitoring individual plans and, at a minimum, the central office should play an additional role in monitoring these at a system level and limiting their use to the greatest extent possible.

Assisting schools to improve practices as they relate to differentiation in teaching and learning, and behaviour management, is a necessary precursor to reducing restrictive practices. Ultimately, Queensland should set an aspirational target around zero use of restrictive practices. However, it is one which will ultimately lead educational practitioners to structure the classroom environment towards minimising its use.

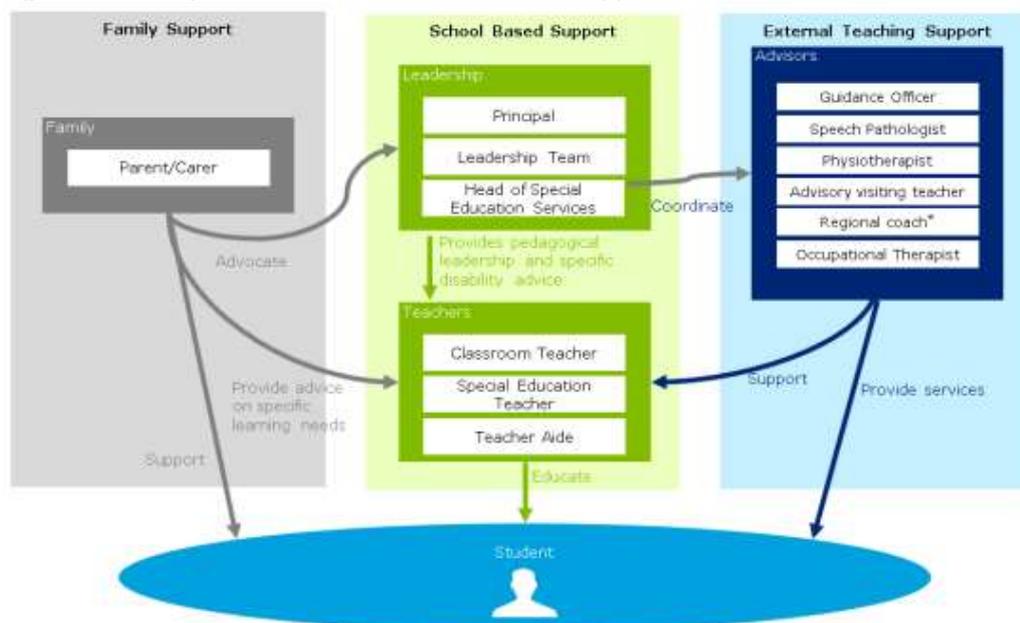
Recommendation 5-3: Restrictive practices

- Uncertainty and risk associated with the use of restrictive practice by teachers should be reduced through clear, unambiguous advice from the central office, and the requirement that restrictive practice use is articulated in a Responsible Behaviour Plan for students.
- The Department should measure and monitor the use of restrictive practice (both planned and unplanned) with the aim of minimising use to the greatest extent possible. The Department should examine existing methods of data collection across schools to collect this information. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

5.4 Workforce capacity and capability

The workforce at the school level is a complex mix of skills and relationships which integrate to create a supportive framework for all students. Figure 5.3 describes an ecosystem which can exist between parents and carers, school based support, external teaching support and the student.

Figure 5.3 Example of a school level workforce to support education of students with disability



Source: Deloitte Access Economics. *Regional coaches include Mental Health coaches, inclusion coaches, behaviour coaches and autism coaches

5.4.2 Current Queensland situation

It was noted throughout consultations at schools that teachers and school leaders are almost universally committed to providing the best learning environments for students with disability.

Consultations with schools provided many examples of teachers undergoing PD online outside of school hours in order to better understand and improve outcomes for students with disability in their classrooms.

Despite this, many teachers have highlighted the potential for improvement in their practice to support students with disability. Teachers from at least six schools consulted have identified the need for improved understanding of how to effectively lead a classroom of students with diverse abilities. Teachers at these schools and others stated that they would like training in better understanding the needs of specific disabilities, such as autism, whereas at least one principal stated that “all (teachers) understand disability, but (there is a) lack of understanding in curriculum differentiation and inclusive education”.

The review team made several enquiries during consultations with school staff regarding the experience of the workforce. School staff were invited to comment, candidly, about the suitability of the workforce to meet the needs of a diverse classroom within contemporary teaching practice.

Staff universally indicated that the existing workforce was inexperienced in classroom differentiation and behaviour management. Following a consolidation of review findings, only a small proportion (13%) of mainstream schools, and no special schools, stated that the education workforce was adequately equipped to teach students with disability.

Schools similarly found it difficult to locate appropriately trained specialist staff – with only a minor proportion (9%) of schools highlighting the availability of specialist staff was not an issue. While this was impacted by resourcing, at least eight schools noted that the problem went beyond that – and went to the *lack of trained specialists within the*

Department to be physically allocated to the school, even when schools had the allocation.

One school, in a rural part of Queensland, highlighted that attracting experienced staff to the school was particularly difficult. Not only was access to training mostly located outside of the area, but teaching staff at the school were mostly new graduates – with little experience of teaching students, let alone providing content differentiation across a larger curriculum.

The recent wave of school resource allocation reform across Australia has significantly devolved powers of decision-making within the education system. This has occurred due to the understanding that schools are best placed to make funding decisions for their unique local context.

School leaders

School leaders are vital to the success of students and the school. They are responsible for communicating the intention of policy to the teachers at their school, managing their school's improvement strategy, and ultimately leading the delivery of practice within the classroom.

It is Queensland policy that principals are responsible for the resources provided to support educational programs of all students in their school, including students with disability who either meet or do not meet EAP criteria. Specifically in relation to students with disability, school leaders must demonstrate the capabilities required to drive school improvement:

- Understand their responsibilities and be aware of system policy and relevant legislation
- Be able to communicate the intent of system policy to teachers and other staff at the school, in their own language
- Be able to measure outcomes for students with disability and monitor this within a school improvement framework
- Identify learning needs within the school and nominate staff for development.

The HOSSES is a position responsible for leading the SEP at the school. In some schools, the HOSSES was seen as responsible just for students with disability, while in some notable examples the HOSSES played a role in school leadership and advice on education of students with disability throughout the school. The HOSSES can play a larger role in PD, the development and teaching of whole school curriculum, and in the advancement of all staff in the education of students with disability.

Selection and induction

Pre-service training is a key element of ensuring teachers enter the workforce with some knowledge of inclusive education practice and some appreciation for the diverse needs of students. Some universities across the state provide subjects in teaching and learning differentiation, however not all. It has been suggested by academics working in schools of education within Queensland universities that teaching and learning differentiation should be introduced across the core curriculum.

Universities do not currently include a sufficient focus on teaching students with disability as part of their core curriculum – and the number of individual *subjects* focusing on this is limited. It has also been suggested by key stakeholders, principals and school leadership teams, particularly for this area but more broadly for teacher education, that practical advice is needed at university in developing teacher skills – as the situations encountered cannot be fully imparted through theory alone.

From the survey, 40% of staff indicated they did not have sufficient preparation in inclusive education in their university/college teacher education program.

"Explicit training of class teachers to work with (children with disability) at the child's individual level and not stereotype them as they can learn. All children can learn at their own individual level. Appreciate what these children can do and build from it." – Teacher

[When asked how the school could better fulfil its requirements under the DDA] *"More training for all staff, not just those indirect contact with students with a disability. A specific pre-service bachelor of inclusive education. Mandatory training for staff who do not have a specific university degree in inclusive education - Teacher at a special school."*

This review sought to understand whether the workforce was equipped to provide classroom differentiation and behaviour management. Only one consultation indicated that staff came to the school with the necessary pre-service training to effectively teach students with disability, and only one school felt that ongoing PD received within the Department was sufficient. Other schools expressed the challenges of managing complex behaviours and adjusting curriculum, assessment and pedagogy.

One large high school in a regional town outlined that despite the presence of PD opportunities offered by the Department, this was not useful unless put into practice. This school also suggested that teaching behaviour management strategies and curriculum differentiation in core university teacher courses would not present any benefits and you can only learn through experience.

Teachers at one state school suggested that university students would be better equipped to enter the workforce if they had to complete work placement in a SEP, or special schools. This school stated that graduate teachers came to the school relatively unaware of the reality they will always have work with students with disability.

Of school staff including teachers, guidance officers and other support staff who participated in the survey, 33% indicated that they had received pre-service training in education for students with disability. Unsurprisingly, this was higher among Heads of Special Education Services (45%) than teachers (35%). This still indicates a relatively low adoption in skills for teaching this cohort of students – particularly given the prevalence of students with disability and learning difficulty across Queensland state schools.

The selection of graduates into teaching following pre-service training is broadly based on the AITSL professional standards. Queensland adopts some strategies to ensure that all new teachers are exposed to an understanding of the diverse needs that they are going to face in the classroom. However, there is potential to more explicitly incorporate an additional expectation of graduate teachers in respect of education for students with disability.

Ongoing PD

Some staff expressed that online PD courses, while informative, are ultimately ineffective and not practically helpful in the classroom. In order for training to be effective, recipients have to be motivated to receive it, prioritise development in the area, have the opportunity to receive ongoing coaching and have practical experience in its use.

68% of staff surveyed indicated they have the opportunity to seek and receive PD to assist in developing their skills as an inclusive educator. However, they also stated that they did not have time and are not appropriately supported to attend face-to-face training. One indicative response from the survey was:

"(The opportunity to develop skills in education of students with disability) is limited. This is largely due to an inability to access PD. Please note the PD exists and is offered to me (indirectly). Like many problems in this sector, the lack of PD access comes back to a lack of time to do so. I have already completed significant hours of mandated PD during and outside of school hours and it simply is not possible for me

to access more without increasing the already serious impact this has had on my students' learning and educational outcomes.” – Classroom teacher

Virtually all teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they had received some professional learning, with the majority of this delivered through the Department (Chart 5.10). This shows that the Department is one of the principal facilitators of learning around inclusive education, and has a strategic role to play in coordinating the PD available and delivering this to staff.

Chart 5.10 Teacher PD



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, review survey.

It was noted from survey results that HOSES had access to more extensive professional development opportunities in this space, with many citing the Autism Hub conferences, HOSES conference and QSIL seminars as PD opportunities they had accessed in the past.

Specialist resources

Consultations with schools indicated that the availability and quality of specialists is not always guaranteed, which is a particular issue in rural and regional areas:

- Access to specialist staff such as OTs, Speech Therapists (STs), psychologists and physiotherapists was highlighted as an issue in both parent and staff surveys/consultations.
 - In the absence of this support, students with disability are not provided with the necessary adjustments to allow them to access the curriculum.
 - Specialists usually have to see multiple children at the same time and have minimal time to consult with teachers.
 - Direct contact with specialist resources is spread thinly amongst students.
 - The specialist time is restricted to verified students, which leaves a gap in support non-verified students.
 - This was found to be a bigger issue in rural areas, as internal services are allocated to verified students in order of priority, leading to an even greater gap in support.
- The current structure of internal service delivery leads to inefficiencies that decreases the benefits of these services. As part of consultations, the review team was able to speak directly to itinerant staff, who all reflected on these issues to some extent.
 - Lack of communication between the school and internal specialist services leads to incomplete forms/referrals which prevents students with disability receiving time with the specialist.

- A lack of engagement with external services leads to guidance officers taking on a diverse set of responsibilities and being overworked.
- Support staff highlighted in the survey and consultation that some teachers would not adopt recommendations around practice provided following consultations.

Support staff themselves feel underutilised, with some complaints relating to the time they spent making direct adjustments for students with disability, and some relating to the lack of base skills among teachers. One comment from the support staff survey highlights this:

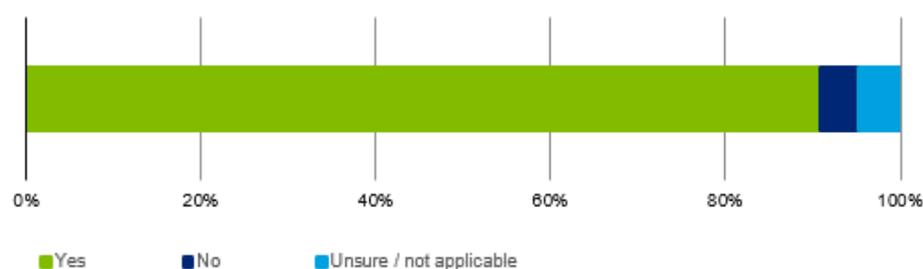
"I encounter teaching staff who in practice do not want to make the reasonable and necessary adjustments that I recommend. These teachers often lack basic understanding of disability, basic knowledge and understanding of inclusive behavioural support practices, and complete ignorance to what is actually meant by the term 'inclusion'.... This challenge is continually having to explain literally basic rights of students with disability to teaching staff and having my time totally wasted." - Physiotherapist

It is important to note that despite these reports, it is not clear what the scale of this issue is without an appropriate benchmark. These issues are not unique to the education of students with disability, but due to the specialised nature of education delivery for these students, the issues are exacerbated for them. The review team consulted with the area responsible for rural and remote services within the Department. This team outlined that the Department is currently developing a rural and remote action plan - a Department initiated plan aimed at linking services across government agencies within rural and remote areas.

External services

Much of the workforce for specialist health and disability services sits outside of the Department itself. 90% of principals indicate that their school interacts with other areas of public support, including health, community services and the NDIS, for students with disability (Chart 5.11).

Chart 5.11 Indication of interaction with other areas of public support for students with disability (n=252)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, students with disability survey. Responses to "Does the school interact with other areas of public support for students with disability, including health, community services and the NDIS?"

Department policy is for external service providers to have limited access to students during school time, and for specialists to be principally located within the Department. School consultations highlighted some challenges associated with external service providers. At least one school refused to cooperate with external service providers at all, forcing parents and carers to take students off site to see their specialist (inside or outside of school hours). One school said that working with external service providers was a challenge and took a lot of the HOSES' time.

As highlighted by the survey comments below, there was a large divergence of views from school leaders around the desirability of specialist staff in schools. While principals at

some schools welcomed this and in fact felt there should be more support from itinerant staff, staff at some schools felt this inhibited the school's ability to deliver their educational curriculum in a flexible manner:

"Support services (both internal and external [to the Department]) are extremely lacking for small schools and remote schools - there should be a specific amount of time not dependant on number of students." – Principal

"If the resources spent on external people with limited skills in coaching, mentoring and managing complex students was spent in school we would be able to do a much better job with these students. The external coaches (inclusion and autism) do not understand each individual school context, do not have deep history and understanding of the child and their family, and their complex interactions and have very limited leadership experience. These resources would be better spent in schools." – Principal

Both schools and key stakeholders expressed uncertainty around how the role of specialists in schools may change with the rollout of the NDIS. Some schools believed that NDIS would help with early intervention, while others presented some concern on this issue due to the planned removal of Early Childhood Development Programs. Rural schools stated that the NDIS would not change much for them, as they do not have enough access to private practitioners.

It is clear that there is significant specialist expertise relating to the education of students with disability sitting outside of the Department itself, and with the rollout of the NDIS this workforce is likely to expand. The state schools sector continues to harbour concerns about including external service providers in its workforce development strategy.

Pre-service training

- It has been suggested by principals, teachers and academics that graduate teachers are entering the profession without the skills needed to run contemporary classrooms with diverse students.

Workforce development policy

- The selection of graduates into teaching, and progression within school leadership, is broadly based on national professional standards. However there is potential to more explicitly incorporate standards of inclusive practice - and a clear justification for doing so given the diverse cohort of students and legal obligations.

Specialist staff

- A range of staff with specialist knowledge relating to the education of students with disability sit within and outside the Department. Opinions across the state schools sector vary as to how to best integrate these skills into education delivery.

Wellbeing and support for staff

Australian principals face a growing pressure from increased workloads, public accountability, responding to requests and concerns from parents and carers, and the ongoing demands of supporting students with complex and challenging behaviours. A 2014 survey found that a source of stress for principal respondents across every sector in each state and territory, including Queensland state schools, is the sheer quantity of work and increasing prevalence of offensive behaviour they have to deal with. Compared to the

general population, principals experience a higher prevalence of violence (seven times higher), threats of violence (five times higher), and adult-adult bullying (four times higher).¹⁴²

Submissions to this review by the Queensland Teachers' Union have noted similar concerns relating to the wellbeing of teachers, and the increased demands continually placed on them through an increasingly crowded curriculum with no commensurate increase in non-contact time resourcing, compensation or provision of mental health support. One indicative quote from a HOSES was:

"Staff feel overwhelmed and undertrained to fully cater to students with disability needs. In my experience staff are more than willing but with an overcrowded curriculum, high behaviour needs, and feelings of inadequate training staff feel challenged and feel like they are unable to cater to students' needs." – HOSES

5.4.3 Moving toward more effective practice

An ideal model of workforce capability will incorporate the following three elements with regard to capability in inclusive education:

- Selection of professionals into the workforce
- Effective PD
- Recognition of these capabilities in the reward structure.

Responses drawn from all constituencies in this review endorse findings from international research calling for high quality professional learning to build the capacity and capability of the Queensland education workforce. There is global recognition that building inclusive education systems requires the development of a system wide strategy for renewed professional learning.¹⁴³ It is important to recognise that this professional learning is a system-wide requirement, not just a provision for teachers and teacher aides. Ensuring that inclusive education is everyone's business means that everyone is engaged in acquiring, developing and sustaining the knowledge, skills and values. This is an ambitious and necessary undertaking.

Throughout this review, the team heard from numerous educators who were highly motivated and self-directed in furthering their understanding of inclusive education practice. Such efforts should be recognised. However an inclusive education professional learning strategy should not rely on voluntarism, self-directed learning or local initiative. The inclusive education professional learning strategy must be centrally driven, well-resourced, referenced to the development needs of the education community and sustainable. Key elements of the professional learning should include:

- Disability awareness training (including familiarity with the DSE and their implications)
- UDL (inclusive pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment; inclusive educational environment planning [including facilities]; workforce planning)
- Specific skill requirements for achieving access, engagement, participation and success for students with disability
- Inclusive leadership training (including building and sustaining inclusive cultures within schools).

Coordinating a strategy for PD

Schools must be able to access high quality professional learning that is both generic and specific. Moreover, the Department must provide leadership in building PD that addresses the need for new learning and cultural change. Coordinating this type of approach and developing a strategic focus for the acquisition of inclusive education skills across Queensland's teaching workforce of over 52,000 teaching and non-teaching staff is a challenge. A specific branch within the Department could serve as the organisational hub

¹⁴² Riley, (2015)

¹⁴³ Ainscow (2015), Scott, Terano, Slee, Husbands & Wilkins (2016)

to enable schools to build their capacity to become more inclusive, and this approach should consider the skills of school leaders, classroom teachers, specialists and teaching assistants. This function could potentially form links with other centres for inclusive education, both nationally and internationally, to build its repository of resources and professional learning opportunities.

Working with universities

The Department should consider existing competencies models that address each of the three areas highlighted above and partner with universities to ensure content is appropriately tailored. This would include working with universities to encourage adoption of inclusive education curriculum and effective practice pedagogies such as UDL. This could occur through the Department leveraging existing relationships between the Queensland College of Teachers, and Deans of Education at Queensland universities.

Workforce capacity and capability

The Department can build workforce capacity by clearly signalling and communicating clear messages to the workforce and wider education community regarding the capabilities that it wants in the classroom:

- **Explicit hiring structures** which outline inclusive education practice as a selection criteria will, in the long term, help to drive the market towards adoption of these skills and aptitudes.
- **Ongoing PD** is necessary for teachers to be able to continue developing their skills in teaching and learning differentiation, and behaviour management.
- Access to **just-in-time training** for specialised situations is necessary in ensuring teachers can get access to resources relating to specific disabilities and student types.

Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability

- The Department should introduce a function designed to coordinate professional development in the area of inclusive education across the state schooling sector, with the structure of this function incorporating existing areas of professional development. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should work with universities to ensure adoption of inclusive education curriculum, and utilise existing levers for doing so. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*
- The Department should conduct a review of its workforce selection, retention and promotion model, including the following elements. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*
 - Consideration in **selection** of professionals into the workforce.
 - **Induction processes** which introduce staff to the environment they are likely to face, the culture they reflect, and the standards of practice they will be supported to uphold.
 - **Effective professional development** – revised with a view to ensuring that quality content is delivered, and that sustained improvement is undertaken.

Wellbeing and support for school staff

The education of students with diverse learning needs has been described as challenging for all school staff. In addition to requiring development of advanced educational knowledge and understanding, teachers need to deal with complex and challenging behaviours, and are faced with numerous emotional challenges given the difficulties children with disability can face with existing educational programs. Teachers should not be dissuaded by these challenges and must be supported by the system when teaching

students with a range of abilities. Change in the expectations of teachers should be accompanied by a clear expectation of levels of support to accommodate that change.

Specialist resources.

This review acknowledges the importance of specialist support, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech language pathologists, in directly working with students with disability, and in helping to develop teachers to better provide support for students. The principal method of delivery of these services presently is through staff allocated directly to schools and Special Education Programs (SEPs), as well as the itinerant staff located within regional offices.

These highly specialised human resources have a strong base outside the state schooling sector itself, and other systems within Australia incorporate models with schools working collaboratively with external specialists. Into the future, the Department should continue to consider service delivery options that intersect with the disability sector to complement the services delivered by the Department, particularly for high needs students or students in remote parts of the state.

5.5 School-level analytical capability

School improvement relies on school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. As is the case with other cohorts of students, students with disability can have diverse needs and require adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment. Subsequently, teachers require specialised data literacy skills to successfully track the performance of these students. This section will explore schools' current overall data analysis capability, as well as their current analysis of student level data, and their analysis of students with disability in particular.

5.5.1 Current Queensland situation

Standard indicators such as NAPLAN are not presently assessed in a way which is suited to measuring and monitoring outcomes for all students.

Schools vary greatly in their use of data to measure and track outcomes for students in their school. It was noted throughout reviews that:

- Some schools relied on their headline indicators alone to track performance.
- Some schools were confident in their use of student level data to identify students with learning needs in different areas.

In approximately half of the schools consultations the review team discussed in detail the extent to which school staff use data to monitor and track outcomes for students with disability, and the extent to which this is used to determine appropriate approaches for students. Inhibiting factors provided in consultations for monitoring outcomes of students with disability, in particular, included:

- Insufficient measures as they specifically relate to students with disability, or a perceived lack of applicability of standardised measures, such as NAPLAN.
- The need to set goals for students with disability within a standardised framework, when those goals are not as appropriate for students with disability.
- Staff not being properly trained in data analysis, or having the tools to disaggregate and track outcomes for students with disability.

Enabling factors included:

- The use of the Australian Curriculum, which has been in place in Queensland state schools since 2012, providing a consistent means of teaching and assessment for students with disability.

- The NCCD aided in identifying and tracking students falling under the broader banner of disability, and helped in identifying achievement gaps between these students and their peers.
- At least two schools used their own customised systems to measure and track outcomes for students with different learning needs.

Some special schools used their own reporting system to reflect smaller learning achievements.

One example of more innovative practice is included below.

Case Study 5-1: Transition data collection at a high school

One school gave an example of data collected on students post school. The data supported a pathways program which was stated to have an almost 100% success rate in placing students with disability into post school options.

The pathways program was aimed at giving senior students the skills to succeed in the post school options that were both desired by the student and their family, and also appropriate for their circumstances. These ranged from entrance into university, vocational education and training courses, jobs and roles at Australian Disability Enterprises.

The data was collected through follow-up phone calls made by the school to the student and their family in the year after completing school. The school also stayed up-to-date with progress through other service providers and contact through the community.

This school was also developing a database with the in-class differentiation required for each student with disability. This information was made easily accessible to all teachers and included information about how to make adjustments to assessment techniques or classroom arrangements. This type of data sharing is particularly pertinent at high school when student with disability might have over ten different teachers in one year.

School-level measurement and monitoring

- Schools currently vary in their ability to identify students with disability, and to disaggregate and track outcomes for these students.

5.5.2 Moving towards more effective policy

Teachers and principals should have access to evidence-based tools and strategies to support their effective provision of education to students with diverse needs. The central office has a key role in assisting schools to monitor and improve their practice, disseminating this knowledge, collaborating with schools to identify effective practice, and thus assisting a move away from less successful practices. This is a key area of work for students with disability in particular, given their diverse learning needs and wide range of existing performance.

Recommendation 5-5: School-level analytical capability.

- Schools should be provided with advice on how to utilise their information bases to determine effectiveness of approaches for students with disability. Education practitioners should be upskilled in data literacy and how to utilise data relating to a wide range of achievement and diverse learning needs. This focus on students with disability should be introduced alongside broader developments with the Evidence Hub. *This recommendation can be implemented over an extended time period.*

5.6 Professional collaboration and information sharing

Professional collaboration refers to the discussions which take place between teachers regarding effective practice (within and across schools), and the discussions between school leaders, and members of the leadership team, around school improvement. Professional collaboration enhances the educational experience for students with disability, as contemporary pedagogical practice is a constantly evolving field in which different principles apply.

5.6.1 Current Queensland situation

The system currently utilises several means of disseminating information, resources and evidence:

- OneSchool as a platform is used to, among other things, provide professional learning and development.
- The Evidence Hub provides access to examples of evidence reports about what works best, where and in what context in Queensland state schools.
- OnePortal serves as a means through which resources can be shared across schools. C2C resources are shared through OnePortal.

There are varying levels of professional collaboration and information sharing across Queensland state schools. Professional networking within the region was reported in consultations to happen informally and was often driven by HOSES networking alongside PD training. Only a small number of schools reported sending staff to observe practices at other schools, or hosting teaching staff from other schools to observe particular models of practice.

Consultations with at least six schools (all from regional areas) identified that there is a perceived lack of channels for schools to share information with central office and other schools about leading contemporary practice or professional learning regarding students with disability. These channels can help enable more effective practice for students with disability. This was particularly highlighted by schools in rural or regional areas, where travel costs were seen as a barrier to attending in-person training or PD.

The system could benefit from further information sharing across online and other platforms. Consultations revealed that a small number of schools would appreciate a platform to share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others. Policy areas relating to disability and inclusive education can play an active role in synthesising resources relating to inclusive teaching practice and disseminating these throughout schools in Queensland. One school suggested that an online platform facilitated by the central office would be a suitable means for disseminating this, and indeed the central office does play a critical role in disseminating this throughout schools within Queensland. Several candidates for further distribution presently exist within the schooling sector, including *The Learning Place* and OnePortal. At least two schools suggested that the

existing school forums for HOSSES are a suitable platform for sharing information. These schools highlighted that their HOSSES regularly runs development sessions for the rest of the school staff to share updated information and lessons.

In the survey and consultations, teachers expressed that they would benefit from observing how other teachers taught students with disability.

The OneSchool system was the primary means of transferring data between schools in relation to students. Teachers from at least four schools raised concerns relating to infrastructure, user-friendliness and information loss. For teachers at these schools, they found OneSchool unnecessarily time-consuming and frustrating to navigate. One school also reported that the fields were often filled incorrectly by other schools when they received a student's transition data and another said that the data is hard to aggregate to inform whole of school decision making.

Importantly, even if resources are disseminated throughout the system, and teachers are aware of these resources, the availability of flexible resourcing for planning time, and the competing requirements on teacher time, limit teachers' capacity to integrate advice into ongoing practice. This work would be a key consideration of the branch tasked with pursuing a coordinated workforce development strategy, as outlined in Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability.

Existing dissemination of evidence

- The Queensland education sector can disseminate different types of information through OneSchool, the Evidence Hub and OnePortal, as well as through the external website.
- One method of sharing information directly between school staff in relation to effective practice for students with disability was the HOSSES conferences.

5.6.2 Moving towards more effective practice

As a central function, and in recognition of the information disparity found in school consultations, the schooling system has a role to play in ensuring that all schools are kept informed of leading contemporary practice developments and opportunities available to them.

Consultations have highlighted that schools would appreciate a platform to share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others. Depending on the audience, an online platform facilitated by the central and regional office would be a suitable means to promote this. Others have suggested that the existing school forums for HOSSES are a suitable platform for sharing information across staff at this level, as well as the adoption of education of students with disability into existing communities of practice among principals. School leaders have a role to play in aiding their school to become a learning community, by fostering a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility.

Recommendation 5-6: Professional collaboration

- The Department should effectively utilise existing levers to facilitate knowledge sharing among staff – including good news stories as they relate to students with disability, and examples of effective practice. Particular attention regarding collaboration and sharing should be applied to students at transition points – including the transition from pre-schools and early childhood development programs into primary school; and from primary into secondary schools. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

5.7 Physical environment

Schools' physical environment and infrastructure can play an important role in creating a positive educational environment for all students. Increasingly, the concept of UDL is being applied to the physical environment at schools, to ensure the environment facilitates, as far as possible, an inclusive learning environment. This section will detail the current efforts of the Queensland schooling sector to create inclusive physical environments across its schools.

5.7.1 Current Queensland situation

The physical environment in Queensland schools is as diverse as the schools and regions themselves. Many schools are contained within old buildings, sometimes with newer sections added as enrolment demand has increased over time. Many schools are situated on sloped sites making them difficult to ensure wheelchair accessibility.

Examples were given in at least three consultations of students in wheelchairs only being able to access particular classrooms – or being required to travel a long distance around the school to avoid stairs or to utilise the single adapted bathroom facility. The review team visited sites and noted these features.

At least six schools highlighted that availability of space is an issue. In particular a lack of areas for breaking out into small group activities. Examples were given of small group activities being held in corridors or in rooms so small that there was not enough space for a second adult, such as an aide, to enter the room.

Schools that had a SEP usually made this area available to students with disability for short periods of quiet time, or withdrawal, under supervision when required. For schools that did not have a space available, at least three schools mentioned using a time-out card system where the student could show the teacher the card when they were starting to feel overwhelmed, go outside and walk or run a lap of the school then come back to class.

The survey suggested that schools are not well set up, physically, in terms of equipment to deliver differentiated education in an inclusive environment.

- 59% of principals believe their school's infrastructure (in terms of buildings, ICT and assistive technology) provides only some to no support for staff to provide a positive educational experience for students with disability.
 - 49% of teachers and school staff believe their school has the physical resources required for staff to effectively manage and teach students with disability.
 - 32% believed their school did not.
- Issues raised by teachers include noisy classrooms, wheelchair accessibility and accessibility for other physical differences, a lack of 'free but secure space' for students to work or play in when necessary, the age and nature of some Queensland state schools preventing appropriate adjustments and support.
- Issues raised by parents and carers and other stakeholders include access to specialised equipment, wheelchair accessibility, hearing loops, and assistive technologies in the classroom.

5.7.2 Moving towards more effective practice

The principles of UDL should be applied to the school environment so that it is suitable to provide education for students with a range of needs. As noted above, existing infrastructure in Queensland is not purpose built to achieve this end and widespread modernisation takes time.

Consultation within the central office highlighted that considerations of design, as they relate to access for students with disability, are currently under consideration. This

process should ensure that no new buildings are developed without an explicit consideration of the inclusive education policy and implementation strategy.

This section (*Section 5*) has established findings and recommendations about the **practice environment** in Queensland state schools, as it relates to students with disability.

The next section (*Section 6*) presents the review's findings and recommendations in relation to the **resourcing model** that supports the education of students with disability in Queensland state schools.

6 Resourcing model



In 2015 the Queensland Government released *Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland*. *Advancing education* outlines the importance of using resources to support student learning and articulates a framework for state school resourcing which is (1) simpler, (2) predictable, (3) flexible, and (4) based on need. These four principles provide a mechanism for informing future directions of broader state school resourcing in Queensland. Accordingly, they are adopted as the overarching point of reference in this review.

Resourcing arrangements – including the model under which resources are distributed and allocated – play an important role supporting education systems in delivering outcomes for their students. To achieve this, they must strive to ensure that the system’s resources are allocated and used in ways that best meet students’ educational needs. With this in mind, the overarching goals of a resourcing model for students with disability are to align with the effective policy framework as outlined in Section 3.2, and support effective practice for students with disability, as outlined in Section 3.3. The pursuit of these objectives must be undertaken mindful of the wider state schools resourcing model – and its interaction with resourcing targeted directly toward students with disability – and in the context of the overall school resourcing budget.

As the discussion in Section 3.3 notes, the state schools sector should be working towards two mutually reinforcing ends: (1) to ensure that students with disability are provided with the adjustments they need to support their full participation in the classroom; and (2) to move practice to a more inclusive model under which individual adjustments become less necessary. This section examines resourcing for students with disability from these dual perspectives.

6.1 Orienting resourcing towards student need

A resourcing model which supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential is one which ensures that resources are targeted in accordance with variation in educational need across the schooling system, including as it manifests among students with disability. Under a model that bears these characteristics, schools whose students require relatively greater levels of adjustment and educational support to achieve learning outcomes on the same basis as their peers receive relatively greater levels of resourcing.

Among the challenges associated with practically adopting this principle are: (i) the challenge of accurately and efficiently gauging variation in educational need; and (ii) ensuring that the process of gauging educational need and any associated identification of individual students or student cohorts does not run counter to inclusivity and to schools adopting a whole school approach to addressing educational need.

Overview 6-1: Current resourcing for students with disability in mainstream Queensland state schools

Students with disability in mainstream schools are supported through the broader classroom teacher resourcing model which provides schools with one teacher for every 25 or 28 students, depending on the year level. This reflects the fact that every school is resourced to accommodate a base level of diversity among its student population.

Over and above this base resourcing, schools receive resource packages aimed to:

- Provide individual adjustments for students with disability, under the EAP.
 - This is the main component of the students with disability resourcing model.
- Fund adjustments to support students with disability not recognised by EAP.
 - This represents 25% of the students with disability resourcing model and is distributed according to schools' total enrolments with an Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSED) weighting. The justification for this is to ensure all students who meet the DDA definition of disability are able to access, participate and succeed in education.
- Provide whole school support for students who are educationally disadvantaged across a range of areas, under the Whole School Support – Student Learning Resource (WSS-SLR) model.
 - The WSS-SLR model provides staff and non-staff resources to support students at risk of not achieving success at school. The 2015 methodology focussed on notional entitlement per school based on 80% unweighted enrolments (school predicted Day 8 2015 enrolments); and 20% Index of Community Socioeconomic Advantage (ICSEA) weighted enrolments.

An additional funding pool, Investing for Success (I4S), provides flexible resources to support schools in meeting localised educational needs. A small pool of resources sits at the central and regional levels to provide a safety net provision.

6.1.1 Individual adjustments

As Section 3.4 describes, one of the key challenges in ensuring effective resourcing arrangements for students with disability is accurately and efficiently gauging variation in individual student educational need and capturing this in the resourcing framework. The diversity of educational need that students with disability face means that proxy indicators are of limited effectiveness and individual student assessment is necessary to achieve acceptable levels of accuracy.

The current approach to assessing and measuring need

The EAP is established on a measure of educational need – the EAP profile. The process for determining resourcing under the EAP operates as follows:

- Students are diagnosed with a verified disability by a medical or other specialist (e.g. speech language pathologist).
- The school guidance officers and regional senior guidance officers work with other school personnel to complete the EAP.
 - Completion of the EAP involves a 36 part questionnaire relating to the measure of educational need, known as the EAP profile. The questionnaire is aimed at

determining adjustments in the areas of curriculum, communication, social and emotional wellbeing, personal care, and environmental access.

- Verifiers then examine EAP profiles and make decisions regarding the level of adjustment required by a student, relative to other profiled students. Based on the response to this questionnaire, students with disability across the schooling system are ranked according to their educational needs profile and placed into one of four bands for the purpose of determining the additional resourcing they receive in mainstream settings.

The EAP profile is intended to serve two purposes: (1) guide staff in determining an appropriate educational response to a student's disability; and (2) allow the system to allocate resources in accordance with relative student need for educational adjustment across schools across the state.

Evidence provided to this review by guidance officers indicated that the EAP profile has aided in determining appropriate responses to support students with disability. The review team spoke to officers within the central office of the Department responsible for administering the EAP and determining policy in relation to disability adjustments and found that the EAP profile has been refined over a number of years in the interest of ensuring its suitability in determining adjustments.

The use of a formal diagnosis threshold to determine eligibility for additional support raises the possibility that students with additional educational needs originating from non-recognised EAP categories are not adequately reflected. Whether these students receive the additional educational support they need rests in part on how schools use their other resource allocations (be that their base funding, WSS-SLR or the 25%). Consultation findings revealed a level of concern regarding the diagnostic threshold in the current model.

- At no mainstream school did teachers describe the existing definition of disability as adequate to cater for the broad range of educational needs they encountered on a daily basis (acknowledging that awareness of the purpose of WSS-SLR and the 25% varied).
- A common theme among staff was that there were students within the school who did not receive support through the EAP, even though the teachers judged that they required individual adjustments.

A diagnosis-based model of resourcing has been shown in other contexts to lead to *diagnostic substitution*¹⁴⁴ - where parents and carers seek diagnosis of a particular disability to gain participation into some program. It is important to note that this practice has not been specifically observed within the Queensland context. However, it is apparent that the resourcing model may inadvertently lead parents/carers and teachers to divert resources towards obtaining a diagnosis, rather than towards assessing and understanding educational needs.

This was the subject of a written submission to this review by Queensland representatives of the Neurodevelopmental Paediatric Society of Australasia. Diagnostic substitution can lead to anomalies in children's lives – creating pressure to make diagnoses of lifetime significance in situations where the diagnosis of a paediatrician is required (for example, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder being reclassified as Autism) or where students are borderline (for example, mild personality quirks being diagnosed as Autism). The submission recommended that:

¹⁴⁴ Coo, et al, (2008)

"The current dual track system that differentiates 'learning support' from 'verification' should be integrated into a single system where all potential children are evaluated on individual merits."¹⁴⁵

A final notable feature of the EAP as a gauge of individual student need is that it is a measure of the *overall level of adjustment* required. It does not require verifiers to make reference to existing levels of quality differentiated teaching and, therefore, does not fully recognise how the quality of existing whole school support affects the need for adjustment at an individual student level. Both the NCCD, which is discussed below, and the resourcing model utilised in NSW require explicit consideration of existing quality differentiated practice. This factor should be considered in the ongoing review of the EAP.

EAP and alignment with education need

- EAP is orientated primarily toward individual adjustments and is not explicitly linked to a whole school approach.
- It applies a formal diagnosis threshold test and students with disability who have not attained a formal diagnosis do not qualify for support under the Program.
- The presence of diagnosis-based eligibility tests can increase the propensity for parents to seek unnecessary diagnoses and this has been shown in jurisdictions that use this model to have unintended consequences.

NCCD as an alternative measure of need

The NCCD assesses whether students are being provided with an educational adjustment – using the concept of reasonable adjustment as defined by the DDA – and subsequently determines the level of that adjustment. Queensland state schools have been participating in the NCCD since its launch as a trial in 2013. The first full year of NCCD collection in Queensland was in 2015. It is presently used across Queensland schools as a tool for teachers to reflect on the extent to which they personalise learning for students with disability in their classrooms and identify the adjustments occurring.

NCCD aims to recognise the relative needs of students and, through reference to a set of qualitative practical descriptions of what is meant by adjustment and differentiated practice, is intended to benchmark the levels of adjustment for students with disability relative to other students across the state.

By articulating adjustments in the context of schools that are providing quality differentiated teaching practice, the NCCD aims to establish that students with disability measured as having an adjustment have an assessed level of educational need *in the context of that school*. In principle, the NCCD has the potential to serve as the basis for a funding model which is able to (i) recognise and reflect the relative needs of students with disability (the NCCD expressly excludes from the collection information about students who do not have, or are not suspected of having, a disability); and (ii) reflect this subject to context. Its practical feasibility as a reliable instrument to inform resourcing will not be determinable for some time.

Contrasting EAP and NCCD

The key differences between EAP and NCCD are: (1) NCCD is conducted by classroom teachers in consultation with HOSSES and specialist staff, whereas EAP adjustment questionnaires are generally completed by guidance officers in consultation with teachers and other school personnel and quality assured by verifiers; (2) the NCCD is a planning

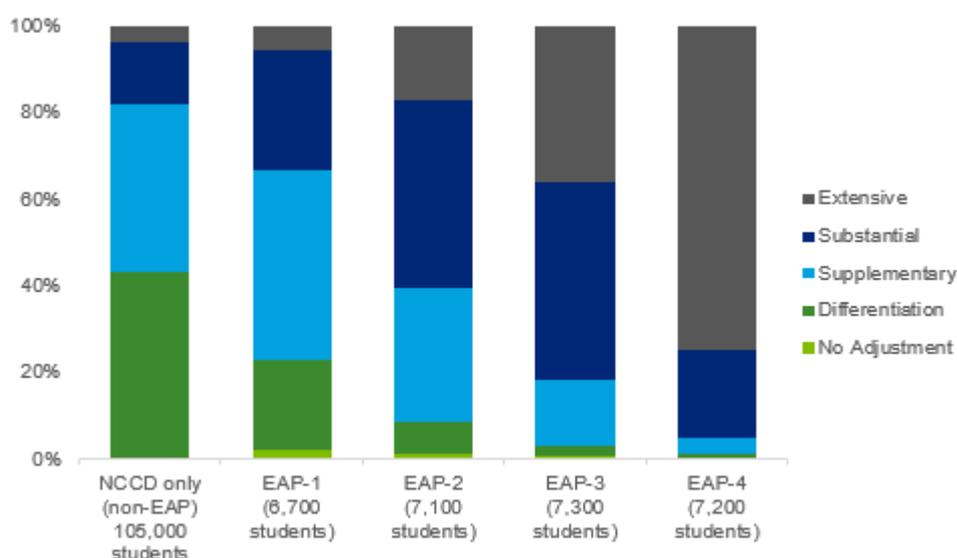
¹⁴⁵ Submission to the review by Queensland representatives of the Neurodevelopmental Paediatric Society of Australasia

tool for educational adjustments and has been used to inform some strategic resourcing, whereas the EAP currently is used to inform school resourcing; (3) NCCD can be undertaken for any student with a disability as defined under the DDA, whereas the EAP is targeted towards diagnosed and verified students; and (4) NCCD is currently not subject to audit or validation at a state level, while the EAP has a validation process built in.

Given the deliberate broader focus of the NCCD, it is considerably broader in the students with disability it captures, compared to the EAP. The NCCD collected information about approximately 25% of the Queensland state school student population in 2015. Chart 6.1 below outlines the correlation between the different assessed levels of need between the EAP and NCCD definitions in 2015. It is imperative to note that the NCCD and EAP are different mechanisms and the NCCD is currently in a stage of relative infancy. Current observations may reflect variation in measurement quality. Nevertheless, a range of observations can be made:

- Broadly, the higher levels of adjustment under EAP are comprised of greater proportions of the higher levels of adjustment under NCCD.
- There are students who are captured under NCCD who are not recognised as having a disability under the EAP.
- Some students are receiving allocations of resourcing for assessed educational need under the EAP – but when assessed under NCCD, are being provided for under *quality differentiated teaching and learning*.¹⁴⁶

Chart 6.1 Alignment of EAP and NCCD levels of adjustment



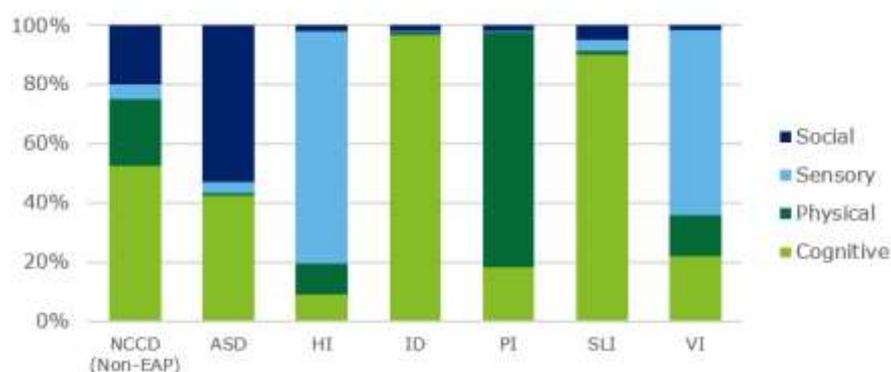
Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016)

Chart 6.2 below outlines the concordance of disability type across the measures, and highlights that the measured categories of disability between the two measures are broadly concordant.

Of those who are registered under NCCD and not EAP, over half are for *cognitive* disorders, with the remainder being *physical* and *social* disorders.

¹⁴⁶ It should be noted that this reflects a small proportion of the overall EAP cohort.

Chart 6.2 Alignment of NCCD and EAP categories



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016). Chart represents students with ASD, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Physical Impairment, Specific Language Impairment and Visual Impairment.

EAP and NCCD concordance

- The relative infancy of NCCD means its interpretation must be undertaken with considerable caution until greater assurance over accuracy has been established.
- NCCD is capturing a larger volume of students than EAP given the different scope of the two approaches.
- While there is broad concordance between EAP and NCCD, based on severity and disability type, there are also notable differences as a result of the application of the different tools.

Assuring educational need

Ideally, schooling systems utilise valid and reliable information on the relative resourcing requirements of every student in order to inform an efficient allocation of resources. The cost of approaches that support the achievement of this varies considerably and any model of verification and validation must appropriately balance the benefits of precision with the costs associated with achieving it.

The EAP verification process is the means through which reported levels of educational need and adjustment are reviewed. Research conducted by the Department has shown that the EAP profiles measured and reported in the Adjustment Information Management System are not a consistently accurate reflection of the adjustments provided within the school.¹⁴⁷ A small sample of schools get selected for validation of the EAP profile for a number of their students. Following the validation process, if students are found to not be classified correctly in accordance with their EAP profile, they are reclassified by the school consistent with the recommendations of the validation team. Because of this reclassification approach, schools face limited direct incentives to ensure their reported profile of need presents valid and reliable information.

In 2016 (as at the time of reporting), three validators had assessed 220 EAP profiles and found that over 50% had been judged in a manner that resulted in over reporting of the level of adjustments and 8% in a manner that resulted in under reporting.¹⁴⁸ While the fixed nature of the funding pool means this does not result in over-resourcing at the

¹⁴⁷ Department of Education and Training – 2016 Validation Snapshot

¹⁴⁸ 2016 Education Adjustment Program (EAP) Validation Snapshot

system level, it does potentially impact the distribution of resources across students and schools.

Verification and validation process

- The existing verification process does not fully ensure that the reporting of educational needs at the school level provides an accurate reflection of relative need across schools at the system level.

Improving the validity and reliability of EAP information could be achieved by strengthening the controls in place over establishing the level of student need, and increasing the frequency with which profiles are reviewed. Additional validators could be employed by the system with the justification that the resulting resource allocation would more truly reflect the distribution of educational need across schools. However, this increased investment in compliance would need to be made with regard to the benefits associated with the improvements in resources allocation it would generate.

Over the longer term, the Department should look to improve the integrity of EAP profiling, through reviewing the scope of the screening process and the role that guidance officers, the regional office, verifiers and validators play. The EAP could also be improved through providing schools with additional coaching on the intended use of the EAP profile.

Because of its relative state of infancy, NCCD lacks a method of quality assurance to ensure accuracy in collection, or consistency across the national population. For this reason, it is not *currently* suited to being used as a measure of need for the purposes of resourcing.¹⁴⁹ However, its potential as an instrument for supporting resource allocations among students with disability in a way that recognises both individual student and school level factors is acknowledged.

Continuing to refine the basis upon which educational need is determined

EAP is based on adjustment and is an instrument designed to help guidance officers, teachers and other school staff consider the educational adjustments they are making for a student in the areas of curriculum, communication, social and emotional wellbeing, personal care, and environmental access. These are essential positive features. However, the current method of applying EAP to students with a *diagnosed* disability precludes students who may need and/or be receiving these adjustments, but are undiagnosed, from attracting EAP resourcing. This is not to say that the schools these students attend do not receive the resourcing required to meet their educational needs – as noted, allocations including WSS-SLR and the 25% of resourcing for students with disability are distributed on measures other than EAP. But it does mean that the application of EAP funding varies based on the presence of a diagnosis.

As an interim measure, the ability of EAP to be simplified and broadened beyond students with a formal diagnosis should be considered in the context of the overall budget for students with disability. There are several potential modifications to EAP which the Department may consider:

- A simplification and consolidation of the elements the EAP considers (building further on the simplification and refinement that has taken place over recent years).
- More explicit linking to active consideration of whole school support.
- A stronger association between eligibility and the definition of disability under the DDA.

¹⁴⁹ This has been highlighted in consultations with central office staff within the Department responsible for administering and analysing results from the NCCD, and has been noted publicly by the Australian Government Minister for Education and Training.

The primary focus of NCCD is an assessment of the extent of the adjustments being made relative to the context of the school. It is directly focused on educational considerations, with a broader base of disability types. NCCD is designed to be used by teachers and has been developed with the intention of being a simple instrument which practically reflects the concept of reasonable adjustment as applied under the DSE.

It is important to note that any transition to an alternative measure of need, either a reviewed EAP, or the NCCD, could result in a greater identification of adjustment than is currently identified through the diagnosis-based model. This would potentially require a re-prioritisation of resources either within funding for students with disability, or school education more broadly. This needs to remain a consideration in any subsequent review of the definition of need.

The recent announcement by the Australian Government that its funding would, for the first time, be allocated according to the NCCD definition of disability,¹⁵⁰ provides a signal that Australian Government funding policy will consider establishing the NCCD as a method of resource allocation more broadly.

Recommendation 6-1: Reviewing the measure of disability

- The Department should continue to engage with the Joint Working Group on the development of the NCCD collection.
- The suitability of NCCD to determine funding should be reviewed at appropriate junctures in its development.
- In the meantime, the Department should consider the feasibility of modifying the diagnostic and verification elements of the EAP, to better reflect a range of educational needs.
- *This recommendation can be actioned over an extended time period.*

6.1.2 Whole school support

A whole school approach to teaching and learning involves investments in professional development and staff time in developing and implementing effective pedagogical approaches that meet the diversity of students' educational need. Anecdotal evidence from consultations indicates that the amount, and type, of resources utilised for whole school support measures is not commensurate with the expectations for the adoption of whole school practice. As a key example of this, teachers have highlighted that they could utilise additional non-contact time to plan classes, access itinerant support staff to aid in developing adjustments for students with disability, and allocate time to collaborate with other teachers.

The intent of the 25% resourcing component described in Overview 6-1, above, is to aid in educational adjustments for all students with disability under the DDA without explicitly linking these to individual adjustments. Given the spectrum of educational needs among students with disability and the cost associated with administering programs like EAP, this is a desirable feature of a students with disability resourcing model. In NSW, a similar intent is achieved by targeting funding through the identification of low performing schools (over a three year period). Alongside the 25%, WSS-SLR aims to directly support and encourage a whole school approach based on an allocation of resourcing also determined by SES.

Administrative data shows that the prevalence of students with disability (as captured through either EAP or NCCD) is highly correlated with measures of socio-economic status.

¹⁵⁰ Joint Statement by Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham and Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, *Responsibly investing in education*, 3 May 2016

Hence, the adoption of SES measures for the 25% and WSS-SLR has some foundation. However, the overarching challenge is that educational need among students with disability manifests in diverse ways across a continuum of need, and proxy measures, including SES, are of only modest value. This is an enduring challenge that all resourcing models grapple with.

Ultimately, the 25% and WSS-SLR are intended to signal a clear intent regarding the adoption of whole school practice. However, the Review finds that the effective use of these resources at the school level is impeded by uncertainty regarding their purpose – including determination of the students that they should be directed towards and the initiatives that they should be invested in.

Whole school funding

- The WSS-SLR model and the 25% of disability funding provide a mechanism for ensuring that non-verified students receive appropriate levels of educational support and that schools are encouraged to adopt whole school approaches.

6.1.3 School setting

Special schools are currently resourced under a dedicated staffing model which provides one classroom teacher for every seven students, with additional resourcing provided based on verified disabilities.

In recognition of the principle that school funding should align with educational need, the system should work towards a method of funding students with disability which adopts variation in educational need as the primary mechanism for determining resourcing allocations.

The Department could seek to apply a consistent needs-based approach across mainstream and special schools with a view to further embedding a more inclusive model across the sector. At the same time, it is important to recognise the concentrations of students with significant needs across different settings and the development of expertise – and potential efficiencies – in meeting the educational needs of students. Recognising the challenges associated with changes to resourcing methodologies, any such consideration would need to be considered over time.

6.2 Flexibility and recognition of local context

Leading school resourcing models provide resources in a manner which allows for flexible targeted use towards priority areas of investment as determined by school leaders in consultation with the school community. However, localised decision making alone is not sufficient for improved outcomes through effective use of available resources. Appropriate supports and accountabilities must be in place to ensure effective school-level decision making and resource use.

The review team examined the level of school-level decision making which is both permitted under existing policy settings and which takes place in practice in the context of education of students with disability in Queensland. In broad terms, there are two dimensions to this: (1) the flexibility which can be exercised regarding the students to which resourcing is directed (i.e. how heavily tied funding is to individual students or student cohorts); and (2) the range of initiatives that school leaders can expend their resourcing on.

In relation to the former, school leaders are currently afforded relatively high levels of flexibility – particularly when it comes to the use of WSS-SLR resourcing and the 25% allocations. Queensland state school resourcing policy reinforces local decision making

through the allocation of resources for students with disability to the school, not the student.¹⁵¹

In consultations, many schools suggested that they do not necessarily utilise resourcing in accordance with the individual streams under which it is provided. Instead, they typically utilise their allocations to make appropriate resourcing investments given their school and student context and priorities. How effectively they achieve this hinges predominantly on experience and capability.

In relation to the initiatives that school leaders expend their resourcing on, resourcing for whole school support and individual adjustments is presently allocated under fixed resource types which consultations indicated can work to limit flexibility in its use. However, it is noted that there is scope to adjust the resource mix of staff types and between staff and flexible resources through local consultative processes in response to local needs.

The Review found that there are opportunities for schools to further support a whole school support approach through increasing collaboration between teachers and specialists. This could be a highly useful resource in allowing for teachers to attend training in contemporary pedagogical practice, or spend time planning their differentiated teaching approach. Delivering a whole school approach, either through RTI or UDL, is a highly specialised method of teaching which requires significant investments of resources in the form of training and teacher planning time. Greater flexibility in resource use has the potential to enable schools to more effectively adopt a whole school approach reflective of their own local context. School resource planning could support this activity.

The Review notes that the broader resourcing model is intended to allow for flexible use of both direct funding and staff time to help improve outcomes for all students and notes the steps taken as part of the Extra Teachers initiative to fund additional primary and special school coordination time over the 2016 to 2018 initiative. In addition, the Review notes the flexible resourcing available under the I4S initiative and the ability for schools to allocate funds through this to address local needs.

A movement towards greater flexibility in resource use, aided by effective accountability and appropriate support for school leaders, is a consideration that extends beyond resourcing arrangements for students with disability and should be considered accordingly.

6.3 Simple and transparent resourcing

The motivation for simplicity of design in resourcing models is to ensure ease of understanding and administration for both governments and individual schools. This in turn ensures costs of compliance and administration are appropriately limited and supports the use of resources in accordance with their intended purpose. Combined with clear messaging and guidance, simplicity can support schools in effectively utilising the available resources to meet the educational needs of their students at a whole school level. However, the benefits of simplicity must be weighed against those associated with reliably recognising and addressing variation in educational need. In this sense, the measure of need and its associated assessment mechanism is, as noted above, a central consideration.

A simple and transparent model of resourcing is one in which the elements of the resourcing model are minimal in number and limited in complexity, and in which there is a direct line of sight between the intent, distribution and application of funding. The review team examined the resourcing for individual adjustments and whole school

¹⁵¹ Despite this, there is a justified perception amongst many parents that resources which have been attracted based on an enrolment of their child should be allocated directly to their child.

support in regard to its simplicity, including the number of components of the resourcing model, the overall complexity of these components, and the clarity of the intent and expectations of this resourcing.

Resourcing for the education of students with disability in Queensland state schools is distributed through a number of instruments which comprise a unique combination of different measures of need, including two separate but similar measures of socio-economic status. These arrangements can send mixed signals to principals regarding how resources should be used. In particular, it can contribute to uncertainty regarding the intended purpose of different resourcing streams and how closely tied to individual students or student groups these streams are. This is partly an issue of simplicity and partly one of communication and guidance.

It is not clear that the application of the 25% allocation for students with disability not captured by the EAP matches its intent across schools. During consultations conducted to inform this review, schools did not mention the 25% allocation when asked about resource allocations for students with disability. Some schools highlighted that resources attracted for students with disability would be directed entirely to adjustments for verified students – and that these would be allocations that reflected individual adjustment in the classroom. Uncertainty about the provision of students with disability resourcing provided on the basis of overall enrolments was echoed in parent/carer consultations – where parents and carers indicated they felt their child was missing out on educational adjustments because they did not meet EAP eligibility criteria. Again, this is as much about guidance and expectations as it is about simplicity and transparency.

Simple and transparent resourcing

- The resourcing model for students with disability is a mix of different types of flexible and fixed resourcing allocations across a range of funding pools.
- The understanding by some schools that these allocations are intended to be used in conjunction with schools' base staffing allocations in order to provide education to a typically diverse cohort of students is not strong at present and the intent of the 25% allocation for unverified students with disability is not well understood across schools.

There is potential to develop a more direct line of sight between the intent and application of the allocation of resources for students with disability. This will be addressed over time through a review of how educational allocations are informed by need, as discussed in Section 6.1. In the meantime, schools should be provided with a simple representation of their resourcing which has been allocated for students with disability, clearly outlining the basis for this allocation and the expectations relating to its use. Clarity of expectations will support schools in more effectively utilising the available resources to meet the education needs of their students on a whole school level.

6.4 Predictable and sustainable resourcing

Predictability and sustainability are important to the long term effectiveness and stability of the resourcing model.

6.4.1 Predictable funding at the school level

Schools are able to operate and plan most effectively when they have an understanding of their expected resourcing over time.

Resourcing received by schools for students with disability reflects the needs of the student cohort enrolled on Day 8 of the school year. Consultations conducted as part of this review highlighted that the current approach to funding based on Day 8 enrolment figures leaves schools exposed to risk in enrolment fluctuations throughout the year. This is not an issue unique to students with disability. However, the levels of resourcing provided to schools for high needs students and the relatively high rates of student mobility among students with disability can amplify its impacts. Notably, students with disability, as recognised by EAP, were twice as likely as students without disability to transfer schools over the course of a year, as shown in Section 4.5.

One of the mechanisms within the system to address the issue of funding uncertainty is the resourcing which is held at the regional level and distributed to schools on an ad-hoc basis (3% of total resources for students with disability). Schools reported accessing this resource when students with high levels of disability enrolled after Day 8 or students with high needs for adjustment were recognised during the year. This same approach to additional funding is adopted for the WSS-SLR resourcing in that there is similarly a 3% allocation administered by the Regional Director on the basis of relative increased need in schools focussing on behaviour or learning needs.

While in principle the timing and frequency of resourcing allocations could be modified to ensure ongoing alignment with enrolment levels, the administrative complexity associated with pursuing this risks being prohibitive.

6.4.2 Sector level sustainability

The long-term sustainability of any resourcing model is contingent on the growth in outlays it generates being acceptable given the state's overall long term fiscal position and the government's policy priorities. Against this backdrop, growth in education resourcing levels would ideally accord with growth in overall educational needs.

As outlined in Section 2.1, since 2011, growth in enrolments of students with disability in Queensland state schools has outstripped general enrolment growth almost four times – 6.0% per annum compared to 1.6% per annum¹⁵².

Principal consultations and survey responses highlighted the school-level perception of this increase in enrolments of students with disability – with long serving teachers and principals commenting, anecdotally, that the increase was notable.

The total dedicated funding pool for students with disability currently grows in accordance with global enrolment growth. As the growth in students with disability outstrips enrolment growth, the available pool of resources for students with verified disability declines on a per-student basis. The Department is required to internally reallocate funding to account for this systemic shortfall and ensure that dedicated resourcing for students with disability does not decline on an overall per-student basis.

Sustainability

- The mechanisms that systematically determine growth in dedicated funding for students with disability in mainstream schools do not fully recognise growth in enrolment and educational need of these students.

Growth in resourcing for students with disability should continue to recognise changing educational need within the context of the overall fiscal envelope in which school resourcing is governed.

¹⁵² Department of Education and Training administrative data

6.5 Moving towards more effective resourcing

Resourcing for students with disability should be (1) based on need, (2) flexible and respectful of local decision making, (3) simple, and (4) predictable. This review has identified potential improvements to existing resource arrangements based on these considerations, and outlined a set of guiding principles which the Department should consider in refining future resourcing arrangements for students with disability.

This review finds that there is an immediate need to generate a greater understanding among the schooling community – those responsible for school-level resourcing decisions in particular – regarding the intended use of the alternative resourcing streams for students with disability. Schools should be guided to utilise resourcing for students with disability in the context of the broader school resourcing model and recognising both whole school and individual student needs. The system would benefit from a more direct line of sight between the intent, distribution and application of resourcing for students with disability.

This would support more effective resource use and provide a stronger message to schools that the system is committed to enabling them to deliver whole school support, in addition to individual adjustments for higher needs students. Accompanying communications should explicitly link to the whole school support policy and P-12 CARF, with the expectation that these flexible resources are used to implement those policies.

Recommendation 6-2: Aligning resourcing use with its intended purpose

- The messaging that accompanies resource allocations intended to provide additional support for students with disability should be strengthened. The purpose and intent of this resourcing needs to be clearer and the basis for accountability stronger.
- Schools should be supported to use these resources in a manner that balances individual student need with whole school resourcing and recognises their local context. *This recommendation can be implemented immediately.*

Over time, recognition of the importance of local decision making and school context in driving effective investments should see consideration given to increasing the flexibility, with appropriate accountability, that school leaders are afforded in the use of resourcing for students with disability.

In recognition of the principle that school funding should align with educational need, resourcing for students with disability should be appropriately benchmarked to reflect relative educational needs across the state schooling sector.

Recommendation 6-3: Future funding for students with disability

- The Department should consider resourcing for students with disability within the broader context of total school resourcing and in light of the proposed directions for NCCD. Resourcing arrangements should aim to support more targeted allocations informed by educational need across different settings. *This recommendation is for further review.*

7 Implementation considerations



Creating a schooling system that supports every student achieving to the maximum of their potential has been – and to a significant extent remains – a major challenge for education systems across the world. While the legislative imperatives have become stronger and their intent less ambiguous, the challenge of crafting every feature of an education system to practically and harmoniously foster and promote high quality education for *all* students remains an enduring one. In many respects, this is not surprising. Historical approaches have run sharply counter to what is now a well-established and widely accepted philosophy toward inclusive education. Unwinding the engrained effects of this takes time.

The findings of this review demonstrate that Queensland’s state schooling sector is making progress in achieving universality in the standards of education it provides but that, like so many of its peers, it must continue this progress if it is to consistently support every student achieving to the maximum of their potential. Continued improvement will be required across all aspects of the system and among all its participants if it is to achieve the goal of fully inclusive education. These changes will of course take time – some more than others – and bring changes to the way resources are used and effort expended across the system. But their mutually reinforcing nature means that through disciplined and coordinated reform, material progress can be made in terms of academic, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students with disability.

7.1 Sequencing the reforms

This review has highlighted scope for improvement across a range of areas. In order to have the greatest effect, the implementation of any changes in response to the accepted recommendations of this review should be deliberate in its approach and sequencing.

The purpose of this review was to enable the Queensland state schooling sector to better meet its obligations under international requirements, and Commonwealth and State legislation and, ultimately, to support students with disability achieving higher educational outcomes. Students with disability should be educated in quality, inclusive environments, and the sector should exhibit consistent, school-wide use of proactive, positive behaviour support strategies.

Acknowledging that implementation planning is a detailed undertaking, some broad directives are provided below based on the findings of this review.

The Department should consider, as a first step, pursuing recommendations relating to the **vision of inclusive education** and development of a **communications plan** to support this (*Recommendation 4-1: Legislative and policy awareness* and *Recommendation 4-2: Statement and implementation strategy*).

Following this, it would be desirable to **determine a structure** which supports the adoption of a strategic focus in this role and drive change across a range of diverse areas. This review has recommended that a taskforce be established to drive this agenda, in the

short term (*Recommendation 4-7: Sector governance and leadership*). This taskforce should also undertake or commission the additional research and reviews proposed in this report. A function to drive workforce development should be incorporated to coordinate workforce development across the teaching workforce (*Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability*).

Over time, the Department will need to drive **contemporaneous and iterative changes in policies** that impact students with disability. Policy relating to school settings should be continually refined to ensure that policy reflects international obligations, the need for parental choice and the relative suitability of different education settings (*Recommendation 4-5: Special School Enrolment Policy*). Behavioural management and the use of restrictive practice presently impact students with disability disproportionately, and the use of these should be refined over time. This should start with a monitoring framework which incorporates measurement and monitoring of the use of both SDA and restrictive practice (*Recommendation 5-2: Behaviour management and policy* and *Recommendation 5-3: Restrictive practices*).

The **capability of the teaching workforce** works in concert to drive improvement, and the Department should undertake a coordinated strategy to build workforce capability. Pre-service training, selection and ongoing PD in inclusive education should be reviewed (*Recommendation 5-4: Workforce capacity and capability*). School staff should have the ability to undertake analysis of the performance of students with disability at a school level (*Recommendation 5-5: School-level analytical capability*). The policy as directed by the sector should reinforce these capabilities (*Recommendation 5-1: Curriculum and pedagogy*). And, importantly, school staff should actively and intentionally learn from one another to build on their own understanding of inclusive education and practice in every classroom (*Recommendation 5-6: Professional collaboration*).

Having a drive to achieve change will result from instituting **accountability for students with disability** in school and system frameworks. Schools and the system will need to be able to measure and track outcomes (*Recommendation 4-3: Performance monitoring and measurement*) and drive improvement. Practitioners will need to be able to access high-quality, contemporary evidence on good practice (*Recommendation 4-4: Evidence base in the education of students with disability*). And the broader community will need to work in concert with schools to play its role in aiding education and driving schools to improve outcomes at the individual level (*Recommendation 4-6: Community and parental engagement*).

Improvements in culture will enable the system to drive the message that **inclusive education is everyone's business** (*Recommendation 4-8: Culture change strategy*).

Adopting the types of recommended changes to practice involve investments in PD and planning, and in order to drive the whole school change adopted throughout this report, schools and teachers will need to continue to be **resourced in a sufficient, flexible manner, with** effective identification and **targeting of educational needs**. (*Recommendation 6-1: Reviewing the measure of disability, Recommendation 6-2: Aligning resourcing use with its intended purpose*). School leaders will need to prioritise funding in school-based budgeting decisions. Over time, the resource allocation model for students with disability should continue to increase its orientation toward educational need, and the benefits of flexibility in supporting effective use of resources to meet whole school and individual student need should continue to be pursued (*Recommendation 6-3: Future funding for students with disability*).

These review recommendations comprise a preliminary roadmap to reform. It is expected that the implementation of this suite of recommended changes will, over time, work in concert to ultimately aid every interaction that every school has with every child, and help realise the Queensland Government's ultimate goal of improving outcomes for students with disability in inclusive settings.

7.2 Future research issues

Not every issue which was encountered throughout this review was able to be fully investigated. In addition to survey responses, this review spoke to 40 unique stakeholders and received over 20 written submissions. These voices represented a wide range of interests.

Over time, the Department should incorporate consideration of these voices into its external communications strategy. The research functions in place throughout the Department should continually be undertaking research into contemporary practice. As part of this, the following issues should be considered.

- Further research should be conducted into the prevalence and impact of disability among **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**, and the development of a strong and culturally appropriate policy response.
- This review has largely focused on awareness, interpretation and understanding of the DDA, as this is a relatively advanced instrument with subservient Standards for education, and a considerable body of work has been conducted to develop training around compliance with the DDA. However, considerations must also be made with regard to Queensland's anti-discrimination law – and any of the recommendations relating to legislation must give consideration to both acts.
- This review has not presented research relating to **explicit instruction**, although submissions relating to its effectiveness were received from the Gold Coast Dyslexia Group and Good to Great Schools Australia. Explicit instruction is a systematic method for presenting learning material in small steps (explain, demonstrate worked examples, guided practice then independent practice) while checking for student understanding. Research indicates this is an effective teaching practice to establish academic achievement of students of a range of abilities. However, it has been criticised due to the inflexible nature of delivery, and the lack of school-level development of teaching practice and methods. Further research should examine whether explicit instruction is an effective mode of delivery for schools, particularly in regional areas.
- For students in **out-of-home care** (OOHC), learning and achieving good educational outcomes can be extremely challenging. Experiences of abuse and neglect, trauma, disrupted attachments, removal from family and placement changes can impact negatively on their functioning. Students in OOHC often experience poor educational and life outcomes compared to other children. Further research should be conducted to assess the appropriateness of existing policy in disability for the wide range of issues faced by students in OOHC.
- Recent research has highlighted that funding arrangements for autism can lead to a phenomenon observed nationally and internationally known as **diagnostic substitution**, although this review has not presented any specific research relevant to the Queensland state schools sector. The prevalence of students with autism in Queensland state schools has grown by 9% per annum over the past 5 years. Research should be conducted to see if this can be partly attributed to EAP adjustment criteria. This provides further support for moving away from diagnostic categories and towards those which focus on student need.
- Resourcing policy is currently built around an individual adjustments approach which relies on **verification of disability**. The Department should undertake further research around the practical impact of moving away from a policy treatment of disability that is aligned to a formal diagnosis, centred around individual adjustments for the child - and towards one which is aligned to a social definition of disability, centred on the ability of the school to provide educational support for every child.
- The review team was afforded a unique opportunity to **examine the data** pertaining to students with disability in multiple collections and examine their achievement, engagement and levels of need. There are questions which can be addressed over the longer term regarding this examination of the data.

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- Further empirical analysis of the 'school effect' and impact on student outcomes for students with disability should be explored. Namely, identifying the variation in student outcomes that can be attributed to school practice, and independent to other confounding student and school characteristics. This will assist in identifying high and low performing schools, and help build the evidence base in establishing *what works* for schools and students with disability. See Appendix D for a preliminary exploration and further detail.
- A regression discontinuity approach should be considered to explore the marginal effects of additional EAP funding, or the improvement in outcomes as a result of greater EAP funding. This empirical analysis would exploit the design of the EAP to allocate funding based on sharp cut-offs in eligibility. See Appendix D for a preliminary exploration and further detail.

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Appendix B Students with disability resourcing model

Education Adjustment Program

Queensland provides support for six categories of disability through the Education Adjustment Program (EAP):

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Physical Impairment
- Speech-language Impairment
- Vision Impairment

The impairment may be diagnosed by an authorised specialist within or outside of the Department. Verification is carried out by a team of state-wide verifiers with experience and qualifications in the relevant disability category. The EAP is also used by schools to report the frequency of the education adjustments provided to meet the teaching and learning needs of students with disability (through an EAP Profile for each student).

Additional flexible resources exist for students who have a disability covered by the DDA but not eligible under these diagnostic criteria.

Resourcing for mainstream schools is provided as:

- additional teacher allocations for students with disability;
- grants for special transport and resources;
- special education programs (where students with disability are clustered with specialist teachers); and
- special education services to support students with disability who do not have a special education program (including advisory teachers, speech-language pathologists, orientation and mobility teachers).

Classroom teachers are allocated to special schools on the basis of all school aged students, including all Prep aged students, recorded on Day 8 in the Adjustment Information Management System in OneSchool.

For special schools, classroom teacher FTE are allocated according to a fixed ratio, with additional classroom teacher funding for students with additional verified impairments.

For mainstream schools, the 2015 allocation methodology for the distribution on Student with Disability resources to mainstream locations was as follows:

- 25% was based upon Day 8 mainstream enrolments weighted according to the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD25).
- 75% on the basis of:
 - FTE enrolments of state school aged (Years 1-12) students with a verified disability and all prep aged students recorded on Day 8 in AIMS OneSchool.
 - The FTE enrolments are weighted according to the student quartile.

Appendix C Other resourcing models for students with disability

Victoria

Victoria's Program for Students with disability (PSD) is a targeted supplementary funding program (a funding loading) for Victorian government schools. It provides resources to schools to support the provision of school-based educational programs for a defined population of students with disability, with moderate to high needs. Under the program, resources are provided directly to Victorian government schools to support the provision of school-based educational programs for eligible students with disability.

The program covers the following categories of disability:

- Physical disability (including students with significant health impairments who require regular paramedical support)
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Severe behaviour disorder not accounted for by other categories of disability
- Intellectual disability
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Severe language disorder with critical education needs.

Students are placed into one of six categories of need based on the severity of their need, with resourcing ranging from: \$6,799 to \$51,902 as a result of this. This is assessed with an Educational Needs Questionnaire (ENQ).

Each indicator of disability must be backed by documentation from a medical provider. In the case of students with intellectual disability or severe language disorder, Assessments Australia undertakes further assessment. In all other cases, documentation and application for funding is completed by a Student Support Group consisting of the school principal (or their nominee), the students' parent/guardian/carer(s) (and their advocate if they so request), and the student, where appropriate.

The Resources Coordination Group, part of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, reviews the application. The group may request additional information and verify the information provided in the ENQ indicators. The school is then notified about the level of funding received.

Source: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2017)

New South Wales

New South Wales (NSW) provides every regular school with an allocation of a learning and support teacher, in recognition of the increasing number of students that are being identified as requiring additional learning and support needs. This allocation begins at either 0.1 or 0.4 FTE, depending on the school's enrolment (though the exact threshold is not published). Additional specialist teacher and flexible funding allocations are determined based upon the school's student learning need index (SLNI). The SLNI is calculated using the number of

students in the lowest 10% bands of NAPLAN testing for the previous 3 year period (PwC, 2013). The types of teachers funded through this program include:

- early school support teacher
- outreach teacher (autism, ED, special education)
- school learning support coordinator
- itinerant support teachers in behaviour, hearing, vision and integration.

New South Wales also provides individual funding through the Integration Funding Support program for several specified categories of disability:

- Language
- Physical Disability
- Intellectual Disability (mild, moderate and severe)
- Hearing Impairment
- Vision Impairment
- Deaf/Blind
- Mental Health Problems
- Autism

Where there is evidence that a student has a significant disorder or malfunction that is not adequately described by one or more of the above criteria and the condition is impacting greatly on educational outcomes, the Coordinator Student Counselling and Welfare together with the Coordinator Special Education will consider all available documentation and make a determination on a case by case basis. The application process asks for a numerical assessment of several focus areas under five domains. Although funding is targeted towards levels of need, it is not clear how many levels of severity are covered or how much funding is allocated to each level of need. A student requiring a new application for disability funding must go through the following process:

- Before applying for funding for additional support, school personnel should first check that all other appropriate avenues available for meeting student needs have been investigated and accessed (for example, school and regional learning assistance program, ESL support, regional behaviour team support, relevant itinerant support) and that an essential gap in support still remains.
- The school counsellor arranges for a current Disability Confirmation Sheet to be provided to the principal, which states that the student meets the Department's disability criteria for the targeted group.
- In the case of a student with a sensory impairment, the Assistant Principal (Vision) or (Hearing) will be involved in the confirmation process.
- The learning support team, which includes the student's parents or carers, meets to consider the focus areas in which additional support is required.
- This team should ensure that the additional funding assistance is necessary to address the student's need.
- Completed applications are provided to the school's disability programs consultant. Principals are given funding which they are permitted to use flexibly.

"Every Student, Every School" program funded separately to the broader needs-based funding model. Base component of an allocation of a learning and support teacher of 0.1 FTE for schools with fewer than 160 enrolments and 0.4 FTE for schools with 160 enrolments or more. A flexible funding allocation is calculated using the "student learning need index" – calculated using the number of students in the lowest 10% bands of NAPLAN testing for the previous 3 year period.

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training (2012), NSW Department of Education and Training (2012)

Western Australia

School disability allocations in Western Australia in 2015 consisted of:

- Educational adjustment – a flexible loading for students with additional learning needs, based on the proportion of students at the school in the bottom 10% of NAPLAN Reading scores.
- Schools are not required to submit applications for the educational adjustment. Instead, the allocation is made based on the proportion of students at the school in the bottom 10% of NAPLAN Reading scores:
 - 0-5% of students: \$733 per eligible student
 - 5-100% of students: increasing gradually from \$733 to \$1,099.50 per student
 - 100% of students: \$1,099.50 per student.
- Individual funding for students with eligible disabilities based on application, approval and review.
- For the individual disability allocation, eight categories of disability are recognised - Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Global Development Delay, Intellectual Disability, Physical Disability, Severe Medical Health Condition, Severe Mental Disorder and Vision Impairment. Under the individual allocation, students are assigned to one of seven levels of disability. Resourcing for these students ranged from \$8,900 per student to \$68,000 per student in 2014, and examples of indicators are provided below.

Table C.1 Levels of disability adjustment, indicators at each level and corresponding funding, WA

Level 1 - \$8,900 per student in 2015	Level 2 - \$21,000 per student in 2015
Students grouped according to educational need	Provision of extra time
Access standard curriculum with modified assessment	Prearranged breaks
Whole class programs implemented to address individual need (e.g. PATHS)	Teaching and reinforcing of resilience embedded in all programs
Class based behaviour plan with individual rewards to targeted students	Practical tasks set for assessment
Pre-teaching of vocabulary	Risk management/health management plan in place
Curriculum visual prompts (eg timetables, phonics charts, graphs)	Social stories to teach concepts
Alternative handouts with reduced content	Picture cues to support teaching
Boundary support/training	Support in appropriate use of equipment (eg orthotics, hearing aids)
Collaboration with colleagues and parents	Support to independent catheterisation
Risk management health care plan - epilepsy	Verbal and physical prompts at point of need
Level 3 - \$33,000 per student in 2015	Level 4 - \$42,900 per student in 2015

<p>Integrate key speech or occupational therapy strategies in to the lessons</p> <p>Access additional resources (eg school psychologist and consulting teachers: disability (sic)</p> <p>Use key cues – pictorial/colour coding or tactile</p> <p>Regularly review and refine adjustments</p> <p>Offer assignments/assessments in alternate formats</p> <p>Substitute assignments in specific circumstances</p> <p>Use of assistive technology to allow access to the curriculum (eg Braille writer, note taker)</p> <p>Use of adaptive computer software</p> <p>Reduce content and modified assessment</p>	<p>Regularly meet with support services to implement the curriculum (eg therapists, specialist behaviour psychologist, autism intervention team)</p> <p>Intervention provided for personal care needs (eg toileting, dressing, eating)</p> <p>Individualised instruction over a number of learning areas</p> <p>Therapy based programs provided at specific times in the week</p> <p>Strategies to manage sensory input/integration</p> <p>Daily communication with parents and carers regarding adjustments to program</p> <p>Provision of finely sequenced individualised assessment and reporting</p> <p>Provision of functional based program, throughout the school day</p>
Level 5 - \$51,600 per student in 2015	Level 6 - \$58,000 per student in 2015
<p>Provide access to work skills/community access programs</p> <p>Use of 2-3 step instructions for based communication</p> <p>Use of individual teaching strategies for part of the school day (e.g. discrete trial training)</p> <p>Significantly reduced learning outcomes in all learning areas</p> <p>Use of real life or photographic symbols pervasive throughout the day</p> <p>Modified less structured classroom focus on engagement via preferred activities</p> <p>Implementation of highly structured behaviour intervention program following school wide functional behaviour analysis</p>	<p>Individual physical prompts throughout the school day</p> <p>Use of 1 or 2 stage instructions throughout the school day</p> <p>Use of intensive reinforcement schedules (eg every 1-3 minutes)</p> <p>The curriculum is focused on “learning to learn”</p> <p>Use of individual teaching strategies for the majority of the school day (eg discrete trial training)</p> <p>Intensive individualised health care plan that requires additional training of staff (eg catheterization, PEG feeding)</p> <p>Use of protective isolation room signed off by Regional Executive Director</p>
Level 7 - \$68,000 per student in 2015	
<p>Alternative method of communication (Auslan)</p> <p>Use of isolation for significant periods of the school day</p> <p>Provision of intensive Team Teach techniques used on a regular basis</p>	

Source: Western Australian Parliament (2014)

British Columbia (Canada)

British Columbia, rather than making assessments of severity within disability categories, provides a per-capita allocation based on the student’s type of disability.

Level and types of disability	Funding allocation per student
Level 1 – Physically Dependent or Deafblind	\$37,700

Level 2 – Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability, Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment, Visual Impairment, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Autism Spectrum Disorder)	\$18,850
Level 3 – Intensive Behaviour Interventions or Serious Mental Illness	\$9,500

Source: British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016

To receive this funding, the student must have an individual education plan, or IEP. These are developed by schools in response to teachers' assessments of need. These must all be backed by the evidence of qualified specialists. This may include a paediatrician, neurologist or psychiatrist, among others, depending on the disability in question.

The IEP describes aspects of the student's education program that are adapted or have been modified, and identifies the support services to be provided. Importantly, it also requires an indication of the present levels of educational performance of the student, goals or measurable outcomes for that student for the school year, and a period of time and process for review of the IEP.

United States of America (Federal)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the same academic achievement standards for all students, except alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Alternate achievement standards are principally delivered through Individual Education plans. Academic assessment for students with disability aims to ensure that, as much as possible, students with disability are assessed on the same basis as their peers, that they are reasonably accommodated in obtaining assessments, that all students are assessed, and that goals are set in relation to students with disability.

- ESSA requires disaggregation of assessment results by student subgroups, including children with disability.
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL). All assessments must be developed, to the extent practicable, using principles of UDL.
- Annual Assessments. States must continue to test all students on statewide assessments in the following areas: reading/language arts and math every year in grades 3-8 and once in high school (9-12); and science once in each grade span (3-5, 6-9, 10-12). These assessments must be aligned to the state's challenging academic standards.
- Goals and Measures of interim progress. States must establish ambitious long-term goals with measures of interim progress for all students and separately for each subgroup, including SWD.
- Accommodations. Appropriate accommodations must be provided for students with disability identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The ESSA also includes provisions for states to manage conditions for teaching and learning in a way which reduces actions which are not exclusive to, but which disproportionately impact, students with disability. These include:

- incidents of bullying and harassment in schools
- overuse of discipline practices (suspensions and expulsions)
- use of aversive behavioural interventions (such as restraints and seclusion).

Appendix D Exploratory econometric analysis of Queensland state school record data

This appendix describes, at a high level, three streams of exploratory analysis, each aimed at revealing further insights into outcomes for students with disability in Queensland state schools. The analysis utilises a range of data sources identified at the student level, including the NCCD, which provides greater insight into a broader groups of students with disability (relative to those identified under the EAP, for example). Notably, the NCCD, at present, remains in a state of infancy, which suggests any analysis relying on this data should be considered as preliminary.

The objectives of this exploratory analysis are:

1. To attribute outcomes for students with disability to key student and school level characteristics. That is, to identify the variety of relationships between student and school characteristics known to influence learning outcomes for students with disability, and more accurately estimate differences in student outcomes that can be attributed to school (and system) level practices and policies.
2. To explore the impact of the EAP on student learning outcomes. This analysis comprises two elements:
 - i) Testing for the *effects of EAP funding* on learning outcomes for students with disability by comparing EAP student outcomes to similar students (in terms of required adjustment, identified by the NCCD) identified through the NCCD but who are not receiving funding through the EAP; and
 - ii) Testing for the *effects of EAP funding* on learning outcomes for students with disability by comparing EAP students on either side of key funding 'thresholds', thereby comparing students with similar levels of need (as measured through the EAP) but who receive significantly different levels of funding (for example, by comparing students with an EAP score at the 24th percentile, to students at the 26th percentile).

In measuring student learning outcomes, the analysis presented here relies on NAPLAN data, as it provides a standardised unit of measurement that is (in general) comparable across students and contexts. NAPLAN is not without its limitations, particularly for students with disability—it is by no means a comprehensive measure of all the outcomes relevant for students with disability, and NAPLAN scores will be a more meaningful measure of student learning for some students with disability, relative to others. Further, participation in NAPLAN is known to be significantly lower for students with disability, relative to other students. Recognising that students with disability who do not participate in NAPLAN are likely to have different characteristics, and levels of need, to those who do participate, this analysis likely overstates the actual extent of learning outcomes for all students with disability.

In contrast, A to E results are known to have significantly higher rates of participation (that is, more students with disability have recorded A to E results, relative to NAPLAN), with comparable rates of participation (in A to E) between students with and without disabilities.

However, the relatively common use of individual curriculum plans (ICPs) for students with disability (in making curriculum assessments based on the A to E) limits the ability for A to E to be used as a *standardised* measures of outcomes, that is comparable across students, for the purpose of this analysis. In addition to achievement based measures of student learning outcomes, future analysis may also wish to explore absences and SDA outcomes, as well as NAPLAN participation itself as an outcome measures.

The following sections describe the approach to each piece of exploratory analysis in greater detail, and present some preliminary findings to motivate further discussion.

Part 1: Explaining variations in student outcomes

A linear regression approach is used to estimate the effect of different student and school characteristics on student learning outcomes (measured in terms of NAPLAN scores). This analysis includes identifying factors, such as a students measured NCCD level, and EAP adjustment quartiles, to capture the average difference in outcomes for students with disability that have different levels of identified need. The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table D.1 below.

This analysis includes four models, to illustrate the effects of different factors.

1. Includes only indicators for whether a student is captured through the EAP and/or NCCD, as well a number of student characteristics (such as sex, age, Indigenous status, and SES).
2. Expands on the first model to also include students’ prior NAPLAN outcomes, which allows for a measure of learning gain.
3. Uses the same indicators as the second model, however it only includes NCCD identification and measures outcomes for students at different NCCD levels.
4. Is similar to the third model, however it includes EAP quartiles, instead of NCCD measures, while also including a school level measure of SES, size and a series of year level controls.

For each model specification (along the four columns), the estimated effect associated with each indicator (along the rows) is provided. For example, after controlling for the average ‘effect’ of student characteristics and prior learning outcomes, students identified through the NCCD achieve, on average, 12.2 points less in NAPLAN scale scores (that is, the ‘effect’ of NCCD identification on learning outcomes, controlling for other factors, is to reduce average NAPLAN performance by 12.2 points). Students identified through the EAP, in addition to the NCCD, achieve, on average, a further 3.7 points less in NAPLAN scale scores, after controlling for the effects of other factors (recognising that most EAP students are also identified by the NCCD).

Table D.1 Regression results: Year 5 NAPLAN numeracy scores (2011-16)

	(1) 2015 only (no prior scores)	(2) 2015 only	(3) 2015 only	(4) 2012-16
NCCD identification	-39.78***	-12.23***		
EAP identification	-6.691***	-3.687**		
Lagged NAPLAN score (Year 3)		0.717***	0.712***	0.699***
NCCD level 1			-7.146***	
NCCD level 2			-15.60***	
NCCD level 3			-21.91***	
NCCD level 4			-25.84***	
EAP quartile 1				-4.245***
EAP quartile 2				-15.05***
EAP quartile 3				-17.74***
EAP quartile 4				-23.09***

ATSI	-15.07***	-4.985***	-4.869***	-7.468***
Female	-10.25***	-7.157***	-7.326***	-6.306***
Part-time	-2.237	-91.48***	-84.81***	-7.575
Age (in years)	8.700***	-1.678**	-1.463**	-2.633***
SES-SEA score	17.99***	5.830***	5.763***	6.419***
Average school SEA				-2.471
School enrolment size				-0.0158
Year = 2013				29.55
Year = 2014				33.48
Year = 2015				35.75
Year = 2016				32.70
Constant	408.0***	234.8***	234.7***	214.2***
Observations	37,549	31,925	31,925	118,732
R-squared	0.145	0.580	0.582	0.574
Number of Schools	917	905	905	1,021

Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis using Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016). *** indicates statistical significant at the 99% level of confidence.

Importantly, these regression results suggest that the difference in outcomes for students identified through the NCCD and EAP (compared to other students) narrows after controlling for other student and school characteristics, which are found to have a strong association with student outcomes. In particular, prior student achievement is found to predict over 40% of the variation in observed student outcomes, compared to around 15% for student level characteristics (including EAP and NCCD indicators). This finding emphasises the presence of *intersectionality* in forms of student need that is present for students with disability. This analysis also shows that higher levels of need, as measured by higher NCCD levels and EAP quartiles, are associated with lower rates of NAPLAN achievement, after controlling for student characteristics. This suggests that the NCCD and EAP processes for measuring relative need align with relative levels of student achievement.

The above analysis demonstrates that a significant proportion of variation in student outcomes can be attributed to a number of student and school characteristics, including indicators of need for students with disability. However, after controlling for the key factors, up to 40% of the variation in student outcomes remains unexplained. In principle, this remaining variation may be associated with other unobserved drivers of student need, including variations in practices and policies at the school and classroom level.

It is possible to isolate the effect of individual schools (that is, unique aspects of school practice and performance) on student outcomes. This is achieved by estimating a fixed¹⁵³ school effect through the use of a multi-level regression approach, which captures the effect of individual schools on student outcomes, after accounting for other observable factors (as outlined in the table above). These school effects are calculated for both: (1) all students; and (2) specifically for students with disability. The estimated school effect can be interpreted as an individual schools value-add to the average performance of students in that school, after accounting for the observed characteristics of those students (and the school). In this way, it is a measure of school performance that is performed on a like-for-like basis (in terms of context) and this reveals the effects of unobserved aspects of school practices and policy.

Indeed, high and low performing schools, based on their additional schools effects (rather than observed outcomes), can then be identified in order to provide an insight into the level of variation in the ability of schools to meet the needs of their students across the sector.

Preliminary analysis suggests that there is variation in the average impact of schools on student outcomes and that there is evidence of systematically high performing schools, even after considering cohort effects. However, in aggregate, only around 2% of the variation in

¹⁵³ A Hausman test suggests that fixed effects (rather than random effects) is more appropriate in this analysis.

student outcomes for students with disability (identified through the EAP) is attributable to school level effects. In contrast, around 8% of the variance for non-EAP students is explained by school level effects. This suggests that variations in school practice and policy have a lesser association with student outcomes for students with disability, which may imply a great degree of uniformity in the approach to supporting these students (and therefore comparable levels of performance). Importantly, this may also suggest that variations in practice which lead to variations in student performance are more prevalent at a level below the school (in aggregate). That is, they are more likely to be influenced by differences in practice in the individual classroom, which is not directly observed in data available for this study.

Further analysis of school performance, incorporating additional outcomes data, such as student attendance and AtoE achievement, effort and behaviour, may reveal further insights in the future.

Part 2: Estimating the effect of the EAP

Part 2a: Matching on NCCD characteristics.

This approach utilises the identification of student need through the EAP and NCCD to isolate the *effects of participation in the EAP*. Using NCCD levels (as a measure of relative need) to match students with similar levels of need, it is possible to estimate the average effect of EAP participation on student outcomes, controlling for the required levels of adjustment. This is possible because within each NCCD adjustment category there exist students with and without EAP funding, but similar needs for adjustment.

It should be noted that this approach relies on the assumption that the NCCD measure of relative need is sufficient to match students in revealing the effects of the EAP. To the extent that the NCCD indicator measures relative need a manner that is inconsistent with the nature of relative need between those who do and do not participate in the EAP, it will not perfectly control for the bias which exists between those students who are and are not currently participating in the EAP.

Due to the observation that the NCCD is in a relative state of infancy, this approach has not been undertaken in this current report. Future analysis may be considered which follows the below procedure.

Students in each group can be matched based on their characteristics (through a standard regression based approach as outlined in Part 1), such that each student recognised under the EAP is matched, by controlling for the effects of observable characteristics, to a student not recognised under the EAP. The benefit of this matching is that if the matched pairs are sufficiently close, an argument may be made that matching on unobservable characteristics is also achieved.

As it is understood that students recognised under EAP may systematically differ from students who are not recognised, by observing subsets that are likely to have the same observable and unobservable characteristics, differences in outcomes may be more confidently attributed to the effect of EAP participation.

Importantly, this approach may estimate both EAP identification effects (that is, the general effect of being part of the EAP program), as well as resourcing effects (that is, the specific effect associated with having access to additional resourcing). Sufficiently similar pairs may not be found for students with very high levels of need for adjustment. This may require a trimming of the distribution, and hence may limit the interpretation of results to certain groups of students recognised under EAP.

The outcomes from this analysis may inform an assessment of the efficacy of the EAP, for particular student cohorts and/or in particular circumstances.

Part 2b: Discontinuities in EAP resourcing

This approach seeks to develop a similar estimate of the effects of the EAP as part 2a, however it specifically considers the effect of resourcing on student outcomes by exploiting the discontinuous nature of resourcing between EAP quartiles. That is, students recognised under EAP with approximately similar levels of need for adjustment are resourced at materially different levels at sharp cut-offs.

For example, a student with a percentile score of 76 and in the highest quartile will receive greater resources than a student with a percentile score of 75 and in the third quartile, despite similar or comparable levels of need for adjustment, as defined by the EAP percentile score measure of need.

A regression discontinuity approach is able to use these cut-offs and level changes in funding between quartiles one and two, two and three, and three and four, in order to estimate the effect of marginal changes in resources due to EAP assessments. Observations are limited to those sufficiently close to the cut-off, with weights also applied based on the relative closeness. The benefits of this approach is that by only considering those students who are close to the funding thresholds within the EAP, it is possible to approximately control for the effects of disability severity on learning outcomes implicit in different EAP levels, and isolate the unique effect of additional funding levels.¹⁵⁴

A shortcoming to this approach, is that students themselves do not explicitly receive resourcing, but rather schools receive a pool of funds that is determined in aggregate of student characteristics. However, as the amount of funding that a student receives is related to their verified disability and required educational adjustments, it is likely that higher per student funding is correlated with higher school funding.

A first step to motivate this analysis is to observe the distribution of scores by EAP percentile and quartile.

Chart D.1 measures the average NAPLAN score by all students recognised under the EAP with a given percentile score. At each cut-off point there is some weak evidence for a threshold effect, however there is considerable noise across the distribution.

However, the shape of scores suggest that slope effects may be present – whereby, each EAP quartile will exhibit different marginal effects of higher EAP percentile scores. Chart D.2 shows the linear plots of each EAP quartile, which are essentially the results from the regression analysis. The slopes suggest a diminishing marginal impact of higher EAP percentile scores for students as it may suggest that additional funding moderates the impact of increasing need for adjustment. That is, the additional effect of EAP percentile scores (as a measure of student need for adjustment) is reduced as funding levels increase (moving through the quartiles), which may indicate the (positive) impact of additional funding.

However, as EAP percentile scores are likely to be non-linear¹⁵⁵, this observed relationship may not reflect funding, but rather the methodology of assigning students to EAP percentiles. Nevertheless, this finding warrants further investigation.

The intercept points in Chart D.2 also provide some weak evidence for threshold effects, whereby the plots for quartile two begin above the end of quartile one, and quartile three begins above quartile two. This suggests that, after controlling for observable student characteristics and comparing students who are relatively 'close' in terms of their need for

¹⁵⁴ These effects can be intuitively thought of as both 'level' and 'slope' changes at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles, and measure the marginal effects of marginal increases in funding.

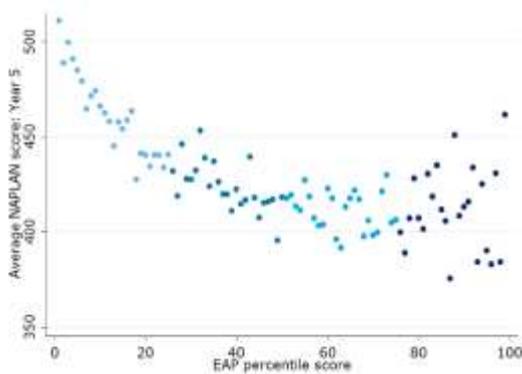
$$Y_{ij} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1(pct_i - threshold) + \alpha_2 upper_i + \alpha_3 upper_i(pct_i - threshold) + \beta X + e_{ij}$$

Where *upper* is an indicator for above the threshold value of a quartile, *pct* is the percentile score of a student, and *threshold* is the value at which a new quartile begins.

¹⁵⁵ That is, a unit increase in EAP percentile scores does not consistently reflect a similar increase in need for adjustment along the spectrum of scores.

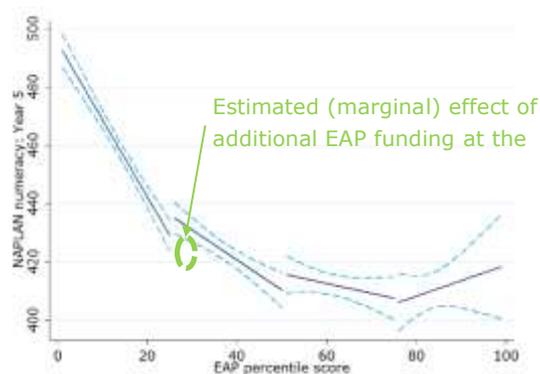
adjustment, the effect of additional funding is an increase in average learning outcomes (highlighted in the illustration of Chart D.2, for students at the 25th EAP percentile).

Chart D.1 Distribution of average Year 5 NAPLAN numeracy score, by EAP percentile (2011-16)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016). Each shade of blue represents a different EAP quartile from 1 to 4 (left to right).

Chart D.2 Linear plots of Year 5 NAPLAN numeracy scores, by EAP quartile and percentile (2011-16)



Source: Department of Education and Training administrative data (2016). Solid lines represent linear plots of the mean by quartile, dashed lines represent the 95% confidence bands for the mean.

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