



**Australian Dyslexia Association Inc.**

***Taken Directly from “National Disability Strategy Youth Round Table Report” Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FHCAsIA)***

### ***Lack of support for people with disabilities attending mainstream schools***

The majority of young people with disabilities voiced a strong preference to attend mainstream schools. However, many indicated that the lack of supports, equipment and adaptive resources in mainstream settings created difficulties and barriers to their full participation and made school, in the words of one young person "a struggle". Young people cite cuts to funding for integration and student support as impacting negatively on their schooling. Likewise a lack of adaptive resources such as captioning, note-taking and speech recognition software, were seen as detrimental to young people's education. Some students also indicated that teachers had been unwilling to adapt to their needs (i.e. by using adaptive technology) in the classroom and did not seem to understand the negative impacts this would have on the student with a disability.

*“There have been some teachers who have refused to adjust to my needs at all.”*

*“I remember my Year 8 Science teacher said she couldn't wear my Microphone because it put holes in her clothes. I couldn't do anything about it... she was the teacher – I was the student. For the record – I failed year 8 science – and it had nothing to do with my ability because in Year 9 science, I had a teacher who wore the Mic and I topped the class.”*

*“At the beginning of Grade 3, I was fully integrated into my local mainstream Primary School. Educationally, I feel that integration was a positive experience for me, but in terms of support, I struggled to cope throughout school due to a lack of teacher's aide funding”.*

### ***Lack of support for students with learning difficulties or other ‘hidden’ or recently recognised disabilities***

Participants at the roundtable whose disabilities had only recently begun to gain recognition in the community such as diabetes, mental health issues, Asperger's Syndrome and dyslexia raised a number of issues. Most indicated that their difficulties had not been recognised during compulsory education and for many it was not until attending TAFE or university that they were able to access support.

Lack of support and early intervention compounds the issues that these young people already face. As indicated by some of our participants, this can result in isolation, falling behind and an increase in stress. Although primary and high-school teachers may potentially be in a good position to identify learning difficulties in their students, a lack of training for teachers in recognising and supporting young people with learning difficulties contributes to these going un-noticed.

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*“One of the main issues facing youth with a learning disability today is that they are seriously disadvantaged by the lack of resources they receive during compulsory education. This places students significantly behind other able-bodied students if they want to reach tertiary education”*

*“Conditions such as dyslexia are not understood or managed in many schools. Many dyslexics are just lost, as they are regarded as stupid. They do not pass the normal tests used to measure capability. I feel this means that a great resource in young Australians is just lost, as dyslexics drop out of the normal streams”.*

### ***Need for transitional supports and accountability in schools***

Young people indicate that support is particularly critical in transitional stages of schooling, such as when the young person is moving from primary school to high school or from a more supported special education setting into mainstream school. Young people are also concerned that systems are not in place to ensure that schools are made accountable for providing necessary and effective support to students with disabilities and that this may mean that students with disabilities miss out on the support they need.

*“There is no appropriate or independent disability quality assurance process for the student”*

### ***Inability to access funded attendant support during post-compulsory education.***

The inability to access funded attendant support for personal care assistance during post-compulsory education is another prominent issue for young people with disabilities. Young people indicate that not having access to personal attendant support during University or TAFE generally resulted in them either not being able to attend an institution, or being forced to rely on informal means such as family members to provide this assistance. One young person attending the roundtable who had fought successfully to be provided with funded personal assistance for university put this simply; *“without personal care assistance, and in particular, toileting; TAFE was out of the question”.*