

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Inquiry into transition support for students with additional or complex needs and their families

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR WITNESSES

Mr Ian Baker, Director – Education Policy and Programs, Catholic Education Commission

Ms Geraldine Gray, State Coordinator Special Learning Needs, Catholic Education Commission

Mr Vince Connor, Director, Diocese of Wilcannia Forbes, Catholic Education Commission

- 1. Can you explain the enrolment process for children with additional or complex needs in your schools? Do staff resources have an effect on these enrolments?**

Principals refer to the Disability Discrimination Act and Standards for Education which are usually located on Diocesan websites

When processing enrolment applications from parents/guardians of students with disabilities Principals follow enrolment guidelines such as that provided. **Attachment 1** Diocesan Officers are available for advice during consideration of an enrolment application for a student with a disability.

It is normal practice for Diocesan officers to work together with school personnel in transition planning and the related determination of the level of support need. This could include observations of the child in their current preschool/ classroom, speaking with current teachers, gathering reports from specialists and working with other service areas within a CEO such as School Facilities or OHS

- 2. Have you heard of families having to re-tell their stories every time their child transitions?**

Dioceses report that in the past this issue has been raised by parents through “Parents of Students with Disabilities” support groups.

The CEC on-line individual planning process has greatly assisted with this issue as teachers can access, on an annual basis, the planning that has taken place for students with additional support needs.

- 3. To what extent are Individual Education Plans utilised in your schools?**

Schools are encouraged to have Individual plans for any student with significant additional needs irrespective of whether or not they meet criteria for funding under Commonwealth Special Learning Grants as Students with Disability (SWD’s)

All schools are required to have individual plans for students with recognised disabilities (under the NSW DEC criteria for SWD’s) such as intellectual disability, autism, sensory, physical disability or diagnosed mental health.

- 4. Submission No. 57 from the NSW Parents' Council states that funding varies for children with a disability in various school sectors. It says on page 7 that 'in the Catholic and Independent sector, there is limited funding in high school to cater for young people with additional needs.'**

a) Do you agree with this statement?

Funds are always "limited" but they are targeted appropriately by level of need applying the CEC Individual Plan process.

b) Do you receive the same funding as public schools for students with additional needs?

No.

Committee members should refer to the July 2010 General Purpose Standing Committee Report: "The Provision of Education to Students with a Disability or Special Needs" at Chapter 3.

- 5. Some jurisdictions legislate to mandate transition planning for students with additional or complex needs. Would such legislation be likely to improve educational outcomes for students in NSW?**

CEC is of the view that special and particular State legislation is unnecessary. The "reasonable adjustment" process required by the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) applies and is sufficient. The DDA applies a very broad definition of disability which is most inclusive. Additional State legislation could lead to unnecessary confusion both educationally and legally.

- 6. In your submission you talk about collaborative programs and services offered by non-government organisations and government agencies (p 2). Can you give some examples of these services?**

Catholic school authorities collaborate with a range of government and non-government organizations. These organizations include:

- o Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- o Guide Dogs Australia
- o Northcott Disability Services
- o The Shepherd Centre
- o Vision Australia and Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children
- o Children's Hospital at Westmead (including CHERI)
- o Royal Children's Hospital Randwick
- o Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT)
- o Department of Health
- o Family advocacy
- o ADHC
- o DEC NSW
- o AIS NSW

- 7. In your submission you say that transitions have been further supported by the development of information packages for families, such as "Stepping Out", "On the move", "Through the Maze" and "Who's going to teach my child" (p 2).**

a) How do parents find out about these information packages?

Parents can access these documents through Early Intervention support teachers and post school agencies as well as through the Government Departments that develop them.

b) Do you think there's anything that could be done to improve these packages?

Further development of multi-media packages that are advertised through GP's and ALL schools would help parents, principals and teachers.

c) Are there any areas not covered by these information packages that you think would benefit from one?

There should always be opportunity for updating information packages with new advice as it becomes available.

The recently revised "Physical As Anything" package produced by Westmead Children's Hospital, in collaboration with DEC NSW, is a noted example.

8. You state that processes for cross-sector collaboration are working well and support positive transitions (p 2). Can you provide more information on which stakeholders are involved in these positive collaborations, and how the collaborations work?

Diocesan officers attend "transition information evenings" for parents, often arranged by early intervention disability services or associations such as LIFE START and Northcott.

Collaboration takes place with early intervention services, pre-schools, private medical practitioners and allied health professionals to develop effective transition to school programs

CECNSW has participated in stakeholder meetings with DEC, ADHC, Department of Health and CHERI (Children's Hospital Education Research Centre)

Collaboration takes place with Universities, TAFE and a range of disability employment services to facilitate the transition of students from school to post-school options

9. In your submission you state that schools and parents are in need of education about the social and educational implications of each transition event. How do propose this could be achieved?

A number of Dioceses support parent of students with disability networks such as Parramatta's "U-Cann" which provides information and support to parents about the social and educational implications of transition.

Diocesan Student Services staff work with schools to develop teacher and support staff understandings of issues related to the transition of students with additional and complex needs.

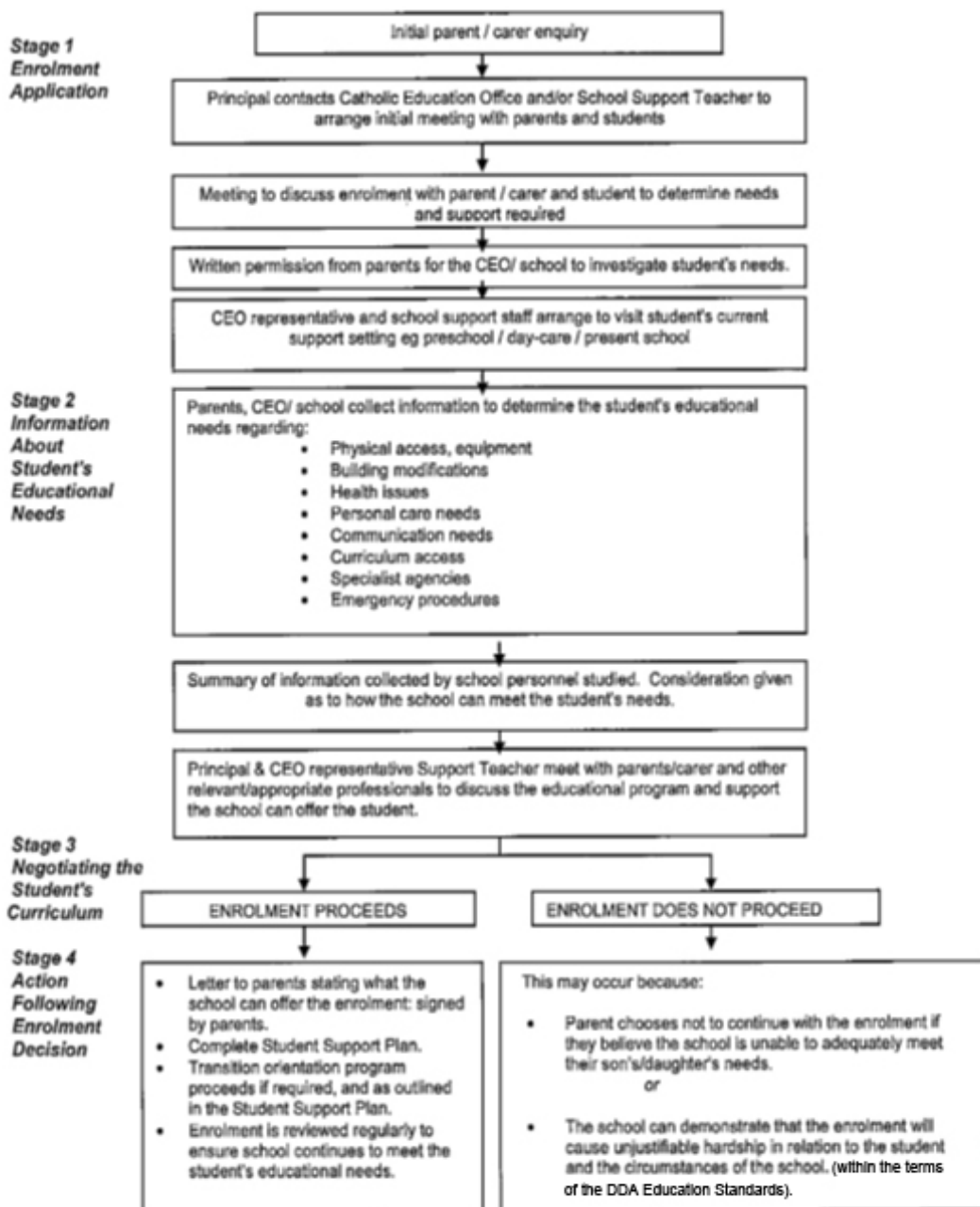
Professional development of teachers and parents who are dealing with the various transition stages would be beneficial. This would allow teachers and parents to discuss concerns with more confidence and identify more transition options for exploration.

- 10. The submission from Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, states that support for students transitioning from primary to secondary school varies, and that whilst all high schools have developed their own processes for gathering information from feeder primary schools, there are no set guidelines for all schools (Submission No. 21, p 2). Do you agree with this statement? Do you think standard guidelines should be developed?**

The quoted statement from Parramatta came from a draft submission which was submitted in error. An amended submission has now been lodged. Parramatta Diocese has well developed processes for providing effective transitions for students with significant needs from primary schools to secondary schools including:

- o Clear transition protocols between secondary schools and their feeder primary schools including:
 - Transfer of Individual Plans from primary schools to secondary schools
 - Processes whereby learning support teachers and other relevant staff from feeder primary schools collaboratively plan with secondary learning support teachers and other relevant colleagues to facilitate the transition of students with additional needs. There are many instances where specific transition programs are developed and implemented in the year prior to the transfer from primary to secondary school
 - Counsellors working in primary schools engage in a formal process of collaborative planning with their secondary colleagues
 - The primary behaviour support team works with the secondary team to ensure that supports are in place from the beginning for students with significant behavioural challenges

Enrolment Procedure and Support for Students with Special Learning Needs



Adapted from Student with Disabilities Enrolment Guidelines for Independent Schools 2002 South Australia

Guidelines for the enrolment of Students with Special Needs - Catholic Education Office Bathurst and Schools of the Diocese of Bathurst 2009