



# Inclusive Education

## White Paper

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This is a consultation draft which does not necessarily reflect the final views of AFI

# Advocacy for Inclusion

## OUR KEY PRIORITIES

Access to quality education is universally recognised as a key pathway to the achievement of social, economic, political and human rights, especially for children.

It is acknowledged around the world that access to education is intrinsically linked to key developmental indicators and milestones from child development to employment. Access to education is formative, underpins other rights and has impacts across the life course.

From the Shut Out Report in 2010 to the hearings of the Disability Royal Commission to the Shaddock review in the ACT, we know that too many students with disability experience barriers to education, poor completion, poor attainment and harm within education settings. Social inclusion is linked to education. People with disabilities are less likely to be employed, have lower incomes, have lower levels of tertiary entry and are less likely to participate in most forms of human interaction.

Discussions about education for students with disabilities are often poorly framed, with the starting point being a series of bad choices between segregated settings and poorly resourced, inadequate settings. There are too few examples of well resourced, universally designed education offerings in mainstream settings – discussions about choice are impossible in the absence of these.

AFI's overarching priority regarding education is to advocate for **improvements to the ACT's education system, which ensure people with disability have access to quality, inclusive education, free from violence, abuse and neglect.** Without an adequate inclusive education system, the rights of people with disability to education remains nominal, and they are denied meaningful opportunities for social and economic inclusion.

The ACT is a Human Rights jurisdiction bound by the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) ratified by the Australian government in 2008. Article 24 of the CRPD recognises "the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning." The ACT Government has also signed up to *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (the National Strategy), which prioritised building "capability in the delivery of inclusive education to improve educational outcomes for school students with disability."

While there is work to be done, we know that the ACT Government has laid some important foundation stones in the journey to inclusive education. It has acknowledged instances of

poor inclusive practice in schools through the 2016 Schools for All report<sup>1</sup> and the Government response<sup>2</sup> and laid out a roadmap for continued focus and investment via The Future of Education Strategy. In 2022 it is embarked on an Inclusive Education Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup>Shaddock, A., Packer, S., and Roy, A. (2015). [Schools for All: Children and Young People](#). Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> ACT Education Directorate, Catholic Education Office, Association of Independent Schools (2016) [Schools for All Program: Responding to the needs of children and young people in Canberra Schools](#).

## Strategic Priorities

This white paper highlights **five strategic policy priorities** that are essential for promoting inclusive education- and delivering a quality strategy. They call on the ACT Government to:

1. Implement the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education’s Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia (2021).
2. Implement universal design principles across all aspects of ACT public schools and create incentives for non-government schools to implement universal design principles.
3. Increase the disability loading funding for students in mainstream schools to ensure they have access to all necessary support, including one-on-one academic, social and behavioural supports. As part of this, provide funding for one full-time position per school to coordinate the administrative workload of data collection and disability support funding applications.
4. Clarify roles and responsibilities with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for in-school supports, to ensure that students with disability are not going without necessary supports.

### Priority 1 - The Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education’s Roadmap

The Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia was developed by a national coalition of organisations committed to advancing inclusive education. In consultation with the ACT Disability Community, AFI has identified this Roadmap as an evidence-based guide for the ACT Government to further its progress toward inclusive education.

The Roadmap “is underpinned by six key pillars to help realise inclusive education in Australia and prevent the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of students with disability.”<sup>3</sup> These six pillars are “Ensure inclusive education, phase out segregated education, increase educational outcomes, stop gatekeeping and other discrimination, eliminate restrictive practises, prevent suspensions and expulsions”.<sup>4</sup>

Within these 6 pillars, the Roadmap outlines the outcomes that are required, over 10 years, and the key levers for change. Some of these levers are aimed at the federal government, however, others are aimed specifically at State or Territory government. For example, it necessitates phasing out of segregated education settings. It also calls for the development of an endorsed 10-year Inclusive Education Plan. AFI notes that the ACT Government has undertaken significant work in developing an Inclusive Education Strategy and implementation plan and calls on the Government to use this strategy to meet the short, medium and long-term outcomes identified in the Roadmap. AFI also notes it is mandatory for education staff in the ACT to undertake online Disability Standards for Education training

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (2020) ‘Driving Change: A Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia’ [acie-roadmap-final-26-october-2020.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.acie.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/acie-roadmap-final-26-october-2020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

and have other professional development opportunities related to disability available to them. The ACIE roadmap is a broad and detailed plan, and work remains at all levels of government.

## Priority 2 – Universal Design Principles

Universal design is highlighted throughout the Roadmap as an important consideration. We have elicited it as a separate priority, as it can and should be implemented across all aspects of the ACT's education system. Specifically, AFI recommends adopting a universal design approach whereby systems, processes and services are designed with improved accessibility for all students, parents and carers, regardless of whether or not disability is identified. This will increase accessibility for people with misdiagnosed or unrecognised support needs and reduce the onus on people with disability to disclose their support needs. AFI particularly notes the need to use universal design principles in the following areas:

- All built and digital infrastructure. This includes the design of new ACT schools and means existing schools will need to be retrofitted.
- The curricula.
- Complaints systems.
- Learning infrastructure and other parent, carer and student resources.

AFI notes commitments have been made to ensure new infrastructure is developed to meet access requirements. We also note that existing schools are able to access resourcing for infrastructure works based on allied health advice to improve support for students with disability. Examples of these works include flexible classroom spaces, quiet rooms and withdrawal spaces, sensory gardens, outdoor courtyards and playgrounds, and disability access compliance such as automatic doors, ramps and accessible toilets. However, we maintain that there is a need for continued effort to retrofit all existing physical, digital and learning infrastructure to meeting universal design requirements. All ACT schools should – over time – be fully accessible in their physical, digital, sensory and learning infrastructure. Where accessible infrastructure is provided it must be maintained. All schools have a legal obligation to comply with the Disability Standards for Education – however current evidence AFI has received anecdotally as well as from schools as polling places indicates there is much work to be done in this area.

## Priority 3 – Significantly Increase Disability Loading and Reduce Administrative Burden of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD)

As of September 2022, the ACT 'Students with Disability loading' is under review. This is important because currently, students and teachers are inadequately supported to ensure quality, inclusive education. Issues include insufficient staff to student ratio. Adequate funding must be provided to have supports such as assistive technology and one-on-one behavioural, social and academic supports where appropriate.

To ensure that the disability loading can be utilised effectively, schools require funding for a full-time position responsible for managing NCCD and disability support funding. The administrative burden is extensive, particularly on top of the current workload of many teachers and is a significant barrier to teachers being able to obtain funding for student-related supports. This position exists at some private schools in Canberra.

## Priority 4 – Clarify Responsibilities with the NDIA

Currently, the *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*, state that “the NDIS will not be responsible for personalising either learning or supports for students that primarily relate to their educational attainment (including teaching, learning assistance and aids, school building modifications and transport between school activities)” (r 7.14). Despite this, there are significant issues arising from the NDIA and the Education Directorate passing responsibilities back and forth. This means students are missing important developmental and academic support, and individual teachers must work harder to compensate for the lack of support. The ACT Government must clarify and improve its interactions with the NDIA, including by advocating for the NDIA to provide education supports and by increasing their responsiveness to disability support-needs in educational settings. Additionally, students must be able to access capacity building supports such as occupational therapy or speech language pathology within school hours without limits to hours or frequency. Teachers must be well supported to manage the needs of these students.

## The Evidence

**There is no evidence that segregation produces better life outcomes** for students with disability.

- A comprehensive review of all studies of inclusive education over a 40-year period by Cologon<sup>5</sup>, compared education outcomes for students with disability in segregated versus regular education environments and found that no study indicated better outcomes in segregated settings.

Conversely, **segregated education leads to poorer academic, social and emotional outcomes** for students with a disability. These negative effects include:

1. **Employment:** Graduates are less likely to get competitive and secure employment.<sup>6</sup>
2. **Abuse and neglect:** Exclusion also results in violence, abuse and neglect. Although this can occur in all educational settings, segregation is a factor that heightens risk of abuse for children with disability.<sup>7</sup> This is as it places students at additional risk by facilitating the concealment of violence, abuse and neglect in closed settings. Isolation and a lack of opportunities is also a form of neglect.

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<sup>5</sup> Cologon, K. (2019). [Towards Inclusive Education: A Necessary Process of Transformation](#). Report written by Dr. Kathy Cologon, Macquarie University for Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA). Accessed 16 September 2022.

<sup>6</sup> European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018). [Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion: A Review of the Literature](#) (S. Symeonidou, ed.). Odense, Denmark, p.14; see also Hehir et al., (2016). [A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education](#). Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates.

<sup>7</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) [A brief guide to the Final Report: Disability](#). Commonwealth of Australia, p. 4.

- 3. Social and Emotional Development:** The review by Cologon<sup>8</sup> found that segregated education reduces the time students with disability spend with their peers. This negatively impacts both their own and peer perceptions of their own skills. Another study by Rose et al (2009): Students in segregated settings experienced higher rates of bullying and victimisation than students in general education settings.<sup>9</sup>

Inclusive education has **substantial short and long-term benefits** for people with disability,<sup>10</sup> including in academic,<sup>11</sup> vocational, cognitive, emotional and social areas. For example:

- 1. Education:** students with disability in inclusive education have better reading comprehension and mathematics skills, attended more school, were nearly twice as likely to engage in some form of secondary education and were more likely to graduate, than students with disability in segregated education<sup>12</sup>.
- 2. Employment:** Students with disability in inclusive education are more likely to live independently and engage in competitive employment post schooling.<sup>13</sup>
- 3. Social and Emotional Development:** Students in inclusive education experienced lower rates of bullying and victimisation than students in segregated education settings.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Rose, C.A., Espelage, D.L. and Monda-Amaya, L.E. (2009). 'Bullying and victimisation rates among students in general and special education: A comparative analysis.' *Educational Psychology*, 29(7), pp. 761-776.

<sup>10</sup> Oh-Young, C. and Filler, J. (2015). 'A meta-analysis of the effects of placement on academic and social skill outcome measures of students with disabilities.' *Research in developmental disabilities* 47, pp. 80-92; De Bruin (2020) 'Does inclusion work?' in L. Graham (Ed.), *Inclusive education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Theory, policy and practice* (pp. 55-78). London: Routledge; National Council on Disability (2018) [The Segregation of Students with Disabilities](#). Washington, DC: National Council on Disability, p. 9. See also, Hehir et al. (2016) and Cologon (2019).

<sup>11</sup> Szumski, G., Smogorzewska, J. and Karwowski, M., (2017). Academic achievement of students without special educational needs in inclusive classrooms: A meta-analysis. *Educational research review*, 21, pp. 33-54.

<sup>12</sup> Cologon, K. (2019). [Towards Inclusive Education: A Necessary Process of Transformation](#). Report written by Dr. Kathy Cologon, Macquarie University for Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA). Accessed 16 September 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Mays, D., Jindal-Snape, D., and Boyle, C. (2020). 'Transitions of children with additional support needs across stages.' In C. Boyle, J. Anderson, A. Page and S. Mavropoulou (Eds.), *Inclusive education: Global issues and controversies* (pp. 163-178). Leiden: Brill.

<sup>14</sup> Rose, Espelage and Monda-Amaya (2009)



## The Australian Context

National data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) found that 89% of school aged students with a disability attend a mainstream school, while 12% attend a segregated school. Of the 89% attending mainstream schools, 18% attend segregated classes within their educational settings.<sup>15</sup> Nationally 18.6% students in mainstream settings are eligible for disability specific funding, only 5.1% receive said funding<sup>16</sup>. 29% either need more support than they receive or receive no support at all. Of the 18% in segregated classes within mainstream settings, 33% need more support than they receive. Finally, 33% of students with disability in segregated schools need more support than they receive.

79% of the general population complete year 12 or equivalent certification (certificate III or above),<sup>17</sup> whereas only 33.4% of people with disability complete year 12 or equivalent certifications.<sup>18</sup> Nationally, students with disability in undergraduate degrees are 5-10% less successful than their peers.<sup>19</sup>

## The ACT Context

### Fewer students receive disability adjustments

- Within the ACT 18.5% of students receive educational adjustment due to disability. The national average is 21.8%. ACT has the second lowest rate of adjustments provided due to disability.<sup>20</sup>

**Too many schools are inaccessible** – as an indicator, only about 20% of schools used as polling places are accessible.

- Using the AEC's (2022) expected election day polling places dataset, 88 schools (mix of primary, secondary, and religious) are used as polling places across the ACT. Of these,
  - 14 (15.9%) are listed as 'inaccessible'
  - 56 (63.6%) are listed as 'assisted access'
  - 18 (20.5%) are listed as 'fully accessible'

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<sup>15</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). [People with disability in Australia 2022](#). Catalogue number DIS 72, AIHW, Australian Government, p. 270.

<sup>16</sup> Shaddock, A., Packer, S., and Roy, A. (2015). [Schools for All: Children and Young People](#). Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). [Secondary education: school retention and completion](#). AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 16 September 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#). ABS Website, accessed 16 September 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Department of Education (2020) [Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2019 Student Data](#), Section 11- Equity Groups, Section 16 – Equity Performance Data. Canberra: Australian Government.

<sup>20</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2022) [National Report on Schooling in Australia data portal: School Students with Disability](#). ACARA Website, accessed 16 September 2022.

Note: accessibility rating related to the specific room/hall/gymnasium where polling takes place.

Despite commitments to inclusion, the **ACT has a sizable share of segregated settings**:

We operate a **'dual-tracked' model reliant on segregation**, where students are segregated in 'special' schools or small group settings. This model is **costly to the community due to an inefficient and coercive use of resources**, specifically:

- Running a dual-tracked system is likely more costly and less efficient due to systemic duplication and the costs of transporting students to segregated schools out of their catchment area. The reduced resourcing available to support students.
- It also permits distribution of funding and resources based on setting rather than student need. Segregated schools receive, on average, \$14,946.75 in funding per student, while the average spending per student for the whole ACT is \$2,642.00 (RoGS). This results in coercion, as many families feel they have no option but to place their children in segregated settings to access the necessary funding and supports.
- While clear figures are difficult to locate, we know there is a sizeable cohort of people with disability in segregated settings in the ACT:
  - In 2021, the four public specialist schools in the ACT, two primary and two secondaries, had 164 and 165 students respectively.
  - Using data from the 2021 ACT Public School Census<sup>21</sup> it may be also be possible to deduce % of students in segregated settings within mainstream schools. The 2015 Shaddock report looks at special needs enrolment by education sector.
  - In 2021, 1656 primary students and 869 secondary students were enrolled in disability education programs. Take away the students enrolled in specialist schools, and that suggests that 1492 in primary and 704 in secondary were enrolled in disability education programs within mainstream schools. It also suggests:
    - Around 5.4% of primary students were enrolled in a specialist disability education program within a mainstream school.
    - Around 3.8% of secondary students enrolled in specialist disability programs within a mainstream school.
    - In their 2019 Australia-wide Education Survey<sup>22</sup>, CYDA found that 15.5% of students who attended a 'mainstream' school were separated from their peers, either on a full-time basis in a special unit or withdrawn to the special unit for instruction in combination with attending a 'regular' class.

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<sup>21</sup> [Census of ACT Public Schools](#), August 2021

<sup>22</sup> Children and Young People with Disability Australia (2019) [Time for Change: The state of play for inclusion of students with disability. Results from the 2019 CYDA National Education Survey.](#)

## What people tell us

AFI has advocated for a number of students and families who have struggled with the lack of inclusivity in the ACT education system. Issues we have supported students and families with include poor maintenance or retrofitting of school buildings, exclusion of or failure to support students with disabilities, lack of disability competency in staff, assumptions that the NDIS will cover supports, low academic outcomes in segregated settings and difficulty transitioning between stages of schooling.

### Case Study - Ali's Story

AFI advocated for Ali, who works at an after-school program operating out of an ACT school. Because of the extremely inaccessible infrastructure of the school, this staff member is not able to enter or exit school buildings on their own. When Ali arrives or leaves work, they must wait for another staff member to let them in or out. There are also spaces within the school they cannot access. The doors required a button to be pressed at the same time as the handle was depressed and originally did not have a ramp. The program Ali works for provided a ramp on its own. Not only is this a discrimination issue but a massive safety risk for every single person with a disability using the school buildings. In the event of a fire or emergency Ali would not be able to evacuate themselves or their students without assistance. Despite the school having the option of a more accessible and safer card swipe system to operate doors, they declined to go down this route due to costs. Despite advocacy to the school from our client, the program and the school community, the issue is currently unresolved.

Below are quotes from report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour.

“Parents and students reported a range of experiences within mainstream settings, with some parents/carers commenting on the very positive and inclusive culture in their schools, and the range of supports provided, while other parents/carers and students reported very difficult experiences. A small number of students appear to be caught in a cycle of suspensions, transfers between schools and reduced school hours, where mainstream schools are not adequately meeting their behavioural support needs”

“Many from the ACT community who spoke with or wrote to the Panel recommended a ‘children and young people focus’ for students with complex needs and challenging behaviour, and for students more generally. Most teachers know and appreciate the importance of teaching this way and try to do so. Throughout the consultation we heard many expressions of good will and the desire to ‘do things better’ for students with complex needs and challenging behaviour in our schools. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that a more personalised, needs-based approach to supporting children is the responsibility of schools alone. It is a responsibility for each of us. We are part of ‘the system’.

The ACT is a small jurisdiction that should and must deliver more effective and coordinated multi-agency, whole of government, and whole of community, support for these students.

Finally, students with complex needs and challenging behaviour in ACT schools provide us with an opportunity, an invitation and a challenge to ‘do school’ better for them, and indeed for all students. Carpenter and colleagues are correct in claiming that we need more creative and responsive approaches to meeting the needs of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour so that they become engaged with school.

If we do not develop the necessary new skills and approaches, “many children will be lost in, and to, our school system; cognitively disenfranchised, socially dysfunctional and emotionally disengaged.”

From the Report of **the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour, 2015**

## RIGHTS AND FRAMEWORKS

Action in this area occurs in the context of frameworks for rights protections and disability inclusion, as well as improving wellbeing.

### **CRPD – Article 24 – Education**

Article 24 of CRPD provides for the right of students with disability to inclusive education. It says that to realise this right ‘without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity’, States Parties shall ‘ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning’ States Parties shall ‘ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning’. It also prohibits exclusion from the general education system on the basis of disability and requires reasonable accommodation and supports to be provided, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

### **CRPD – General Comment 4 – Education**

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, which is the body set up to monitor the implementation of the CRPD, has explained the meaning of inclusive education comprehensively (General Comment No.4, 2016) and stated that ‘segregated models of education, which exclude students with disabilities from mainstream and inclusive education on the basis of disability’, contravene the CRPD (General Comment No.6, 2018).

*“The right to inclusive education encompasses a transformation in culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to accommodate the differing requirements and identities of individual students, together with a commitment to remove the barriers that impede that possibility.”*

### **Wellbeing indicators – Education and Lifelong learning**

*“Canberrans have equitable access to education and learning opportunities, through all ages and stages of life, to develop and gain the skills needed to live life well.”*

### **Relevant sections of the Parliamentary Agreement – ACT Labor Policy Platform**

*“ACT Labor believes in providing a high-quality education to every child, and in welcoming and helping all children to reach their potential.”*

### **National Disability Strategy – Education and Learning Priorities**

The National Disability Strategy 2021- 2031, signed by the Prime Minister and the ACT Chief Minister is a nationally agreed commitment to undertake actions to realise CRPD. Priority 2 in Education and Learning is "Build capability in the delivery of inclusive education to improve educational outcomes for school students with disability"

*Policy Priority 2: Build capability in the delivery of inclusive education to improve educational outcomes for school students with disability*

*“Students with disability have a right to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability, in an environment free from bullying, harassment or exclusion.”*

## Background

### Definition of Inclusive Education

AFI defines exclusion as occurring when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form. AFI defines a mainstream school as any school accepting all students regardless of disability status. Students with disability may be integrated into mainstream classes or segregated into small group programs. Segregation is 'cloaked' in Canberra. Because a relatively small percentage of ACT students attend *fully* segregated schools, the majority of students with disability are at mainstream schools in some capacity. This does not mean that they experience inclusive education. Segregation occurs when the education of students is provided in separated environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities. Integration is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream education institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardised requirements of such institutions<sup>23</sup>. Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences<sup>24</sup>.

### The ACT Education System

Students with disability currently experience education in one of three settings: mainstream classrooms, disability education programs within a mainstream school, or at a segregated school.

### The Funding System

As outlined above, the average spending per student from the territory budget for the whole ACT is \$2642<sup>25</sup>, while the average spending from the territory budget per student in segregated schools is \$14,946.75. Taking into account federal and territory funding, for 2020 the base amount was \$11,747 for primary and \$14,761 for each secondary student. Funding that schools receive is based on the education departments student resource allocation policy. Schools receive core funding which consists of per student funding, stages of schooling funding and base funding. Schools can also receive additional loading allocations based on number of students from a low socio-economic status background, students with English as additional language or dialect, students with disability, small or regional schools and as Aboriginal Torres Strait Island student support. Other allocations are made for school

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<sup>23</sup> General comment 4; Hehir et al., (2016)

<sup>24</sup> General comment 4

<sup>25</sup> Productivity Commission (2022)

operation, continuum of education and transition support. Funding for students with disability is based on needs identified through the Student-Centred Appraisal of Need process.

## **The NDIS and Inclusive Education**

As outlined above, schools are responsible for funding any supports for students with disability that relate specifically to learning, studying and achieving educational outcomes. This includes adjusting school infrastructure like ramps, providing fixed technology and other learning tools, teaching and learning assistance, and curriculum changes. Notably schools are also responsible for the cost of therapies delivered in schools for educational purposes.

Schools are responsible for adjusting teaching methods, providing learning assistance and aids, modifying the school building, and providing transport between school activities such as to excursions and sporting carnivals. The NDIS is responsible for supports for everyday activities needed because of the functional impact of disability that aren't related to learning, such as personal care and support at school, transport to and from school, and specialist support to transition to higher education, training or work. However, the NDIS will fund specialised support and training for school staff to help them understand and carry out a student's specific support needs, such as specialised behaviour intervention and support.



## The Evidence for Inclusive Education

This section provides additional information regarding the extensive body of research which shows that inclusive education significantly benefits children with disabilities, children without disabilities and teachers. It may provide for further reading and exploration of inclusive education and promote further understanding of how it would benefit the ACT's education system.

### The benefits for children with disability

The numerous benefits discussed above won't be repeated here. However, an additional study that indicates the benefits for children with disability includes a review<sup>26</sup> of 280 studies on inclusive education across 25 countries. This review showed that there is evidence of positive outcomes for social, academic, communication and physical development in students who do and do not experience disability.

It is important to note that the research regarding inclusive education does not exclude students with 'severe' or 'profound' disabilities. There is no evidence to support a claim that there are some students 'too disabled' for inclusive education.<sup>27</sup>

### The benefits for children without disability

Meta-analysis<sup>28</sup> confirms findings made by Hehir et al (2016) that there are positive academic benefits for students without disability in inclusive education. As well as enhanced learning opportunities and experiences, students without disability also developed a greater sensitivity to the needs of others, improved interpersonal skills and an acceptance and understanding of human diversity.<sup>29</sup> Research also shows an increase in sense of community belonging and social justice for all students.<sup>30</sup> In this way, inclusive education increases students' acceptance of those different from themselves and decreases bullying.

Moreover, inclusive education does not negatively impact students without disability. Non-disabled students in inclusive classrooms experience the same level of teacher attention and support, and similar levels of academic achievement as students in non-inclusive classrooms.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cologon (2019)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Szumski et al., (2017)

<sup>29</sup> Cologon 2019

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Hehir et al., (2016)

# About Advocacy for Inclusion

Advocacy for Inclusion acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners of the Australian land on which we work.

Advocacy for Inclusion provides national systemic advocacy and independent individual, self and advocacy for people with disabilities in the Australian Capital Territory. We are a Disabled Peoples Organisation which means most of our board, members and staff are people with disabilities. We represent all people with disabilities and recognise diversity.

We act with and on behalf of individuals to act on their own behalf, to obtain a fair and just outcome.

Advocacy for Inclusion works within a human rights framework and acknowledges the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and is signed onto the *ACT Human Rights Act 2004*.

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