



Media Release

Teachers, schools need resources to support students with autism

The call by Senator Pauline Hanson for students with autism to be removed from mainstream classrooms highlights the need for a better understanding of the resources needed to teach students with a disability, Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) said today.

CECNSW Director of Education Policy and Programs, Ian Baker, said Senator Hanson's comments also fail to recognise how beneficial an inclusive approach to education is for students with and without a disability.

"One in 20 NSW Catholic school students has a disability – the equivalent of one child per classroom," Mr Baker said.

"Catholic education supports the right of students with autism and other disabilities to be educated in the most suitable setting with appropriate curriculum access, consistent with Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

"There is important research in this area that shows an inclusive approach to school education often benefits students with and without disabilities.

"For integration to be successful, however, schools and teachers must have the appropriate resources and support to be able to deliver that integration effectively.

"Governments must provide adequate funding for resources and professional development to equip teachers to support students with a disability.

"This is why the current school funding debate is so important to the provision of appropriate support for students with special needs.

"The solution is not to segregate students; it is to ensure that appropriate resources and training are available for our teachers to help them support students with special needs in the most suitable learning environment."

Mr Baker said Catholic schools strive to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for students with a disability and their parents.

"There are eight Catholic special schools in NSW, however the vast majority of our 13,000+ students with a disability are educated in our mainstream schools."

CECNSW represents the state's 591 Catholic schools, which educate some 258,000 students and employ 27,000 teaching and support staff.

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