

Annual Report 2003

**MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SA**



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To the Minister for Education and Children's Services

The role of the Ministerial Advisory Committee is to provide policy advice to you, as Minister, on the educational needs of children and students with disabilities in South Australia. During 2003, three Task Groups were formed to provide advice on issues related to whole-school behaviour management, hearing student voices, and social inclusion.

The aim of the behaviour management project was to investigate key elements for the successful implementation of a whole-school approach to managing challenging behaviour for students with disabilities. A number of schools and one preschool from across four Australian states participated in this study. These sites were chosen because they had effectively demonstrated the whole-school approach to behaviour management over a number of years. One of the report recommendations, to be implemented by the Committee in 2004, is a project where a number of preschools and schools in South Australia are selected to trial the whole-school approach to managing challenging behaviour.

Over several years the Committee has discussed how the experience and opinions of school students with disabilities could contribute to policy-related decisions in South Australia, particularly those concerned with education. For the Hearing Student Voices project, information was collected from 52 secondary level students from a range of educational settings across the State's three education sectors. A number of issues emerged from the data, in particular, related to bullying, support from teaching staff, and the school curriculum.

Finally, the Minister for Education and Children's Services directed the Ministerial Advisory Committee to undertake a project that investigated how the education sectors contribute to the Government's Social Inclusion Initiative. This project focused on children and students with disabilities and their families and, in particular, how they access cross-portfolio support through preschools and schools. A questionnaire was developed to survey all preschools and schools in South Australia with a response rate of 50 percent. Issues discussed in the project report include the relationships between preschools/schools and agencies outside the education sector, as well as the information available on disability and support through preschools and schools.

In addition to undertaking these research projects, the Committee made recommendations on the allocation of Commonwealth/State Special Education Grants to non-government organisations involved in the education of students with disabilities. In 2003, this responsibility included the allocation of both Recurrent and Capital Grants (previously administered by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs).

The support of the Executive Officer, Margaret McColl and Project Officers, Rosanne DeBats, Luisa Pirone, and Jo Shearer has ensured excellent work and a cooperative approach throughout the year. The ongoing support of Lyn Kohl as Executive Secretary is also acknowledged.

This Report summarises the work of the year, and the commitment of Committee members is evident. It is a privilege to present this Annual Report.

Yours sincerely

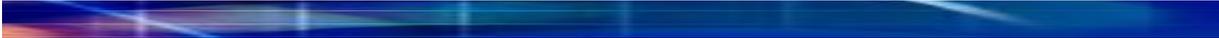
Diana Hill
CHAIRPERSON
MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Terms of Reference



The Minister for Education and Children's Services has established the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities. The Committee's purpose is to provide policy advice on the education of children and students with disabilities who participate in early intervention programs, preschools, schools (government and non-government) and in particular to:

- Provide advice to the Minister in relation to existing policies and, where appropriate, advise on the development of new policy.
- Provide advice to the Minister on the allocation and application of State and Commonwealth Special Education Grants to support the education of children and students with disabilities.
- Provide advice on other matters referred to it by the Minister.
- Conduct research and manage projects as required from time to time by the Minister or as approved by the Minister.

Role and Purpose



The role of the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities is to provide policy advice to the Minister for Education and Children's Services in relation to children and students with disabilities. Committee members consist of a student, parents, the three education sectors, education unions and health and disability professionals (see Appendix 3).

Policy advice is developed through projects and activities undertaken at the request of or with approval from the Minister. Three new projects were undertaken in 2003. Project reports published in recent years are available from the Secretariat (telephone 8226 3632) or may be downloaded in PDF format from the Committee's Website. Members of the Task Groups overseeing projects for 2003 are listed in Appendix 3.

In addition, the Ministerial Advisory Committee provides advice to the Minister on the allocation of Commonwealth and State special education funding to non-government organisations involved with the education of children and students with disabilities.

Further information about the Ministerial Advisory Committee
is available on the Website at www.macswd.sa.gov.au.

Policy Related Projects

Each year, the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities undertakes a number of Statewide projects that have been approved by the Minister for Education and Children's Services. The projects may be initiated by the Minister or suggested by the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

All projects focus on children and students with disabilities and must be relevant to the three education sectors, ie State, Catholic and Independent preschools and schools. Task Groups are formed for each project and members are chosen for their experience and expertise in the particular topic. The following projects were conducted in 2003 and, once approved by the Minister, published reports will be available on the Committee's Website.

● Behaviour Management: A Whole-School Approach

The Committee undertook a project on managing the challenging behaviours of students with disabilities. The aim of this project was to investigate key elements for the successful implementation of a whole-school approach to behaviour management for these students. It should be noted that the principles of whole-school implementation were the focus of investigation, not the types of behaviour management programs available.

A number of schools and one preschool from across four Australian states participated in the project. These sites were chosen because they had effectively demonstrated the whole-school approach to behaviour management over a number of years. Interviews with preschool and school leaders, teachers, teacher assistants and parents provided the qualitative data for analysis.

The report includes an analysis of data that illustrate how the whole-school approach to behaviour management is beneficial for students with disabilities, their parents or carers and education personnel. Although not the focus of the study, the move by schools to positive behaviour management practice is acknowledged as an important factor in the implementation of successful programs.

Several factors are identified as essential for the successful implementation of whole-school behaviour management programs. These include:

- committed leadership
- a level of consensus among teaching staff
- a partnership approach with regular communication between staff and with parents
- the adoption of a behaviour management program with a clear structure
- consistency with some flexibility for individual student need
- ongoing professional development, particularly for new staff.

All schools in this study had adopted a proactive, supportive approach where the students were seen as learners, and challenging behaviour was acknowledged as a method of communication. Fostering respectful, collaborative and supportive relationships with parents represents a critical dimension to the schools' ethos. Teachers, support staff and parents are provided with regular opportunities to share difficulties, help one another find solutions and celebrate achievements. This increased collegial support appeared to reduce stress, as teachers were able to focus on the core business of student learning.

One of the recommendations of the report, to be implemented by the Committee in 2004, is a project where a number of preschools and schools in South Australia are selected to trial the whole-school approach outlined in the 2003 report.

Hearing Student Voices

The Hearing Student Voices project investigated issues of importance to students with disabilities. These included their experiences of schooling and their participation in decision-making, in relation to themselves and the broader environment of school and community. Students participating in the project were invited to 'look back' at their school experiences and 'look forward' to their future. In addition, the project examined how the participation of students with disabilities could be increased in a variety of forums and leadership roles, to ensure their voice is included in broad policy decisions, in particular those related to education.

Eight schools across the three education sectors (State, Catholic and Independent) were chosen to participate in the project. Information was collected from a total of 52 students attending 10 discussion groups. Students with physical, hearing, vision, intellectual, communication and language impairment, from the range of educational settings (mainstream, special class, special unit and special school) contributed to the project.

The study reiterates the importance of seeking and considering the views of students with disabilities in all aspects of their lives, and encouraging them to participate in decisions that impact on their lives in general and their schooling in particular. The Executive Summary in the report documents key findings from the project related to:

- the existence and harm of bullying or harassment
- support from teaching staff, including teacher assistants
- accommodations to teaching and learning, including modifications to teaching methodology
- peer support, including peers with the same disability
- self perception and ability to disclose disability in seeking support
- transition from school.

Information was also gathered on various models for youth inclusion that had been developed or implemented through government and community organisations. The following considerations relate to initiatives in youth inclusion, both in general and in the disability area:

- Existing youth organisations and forums provide a potential opportunity for students with disabilities to raise issues and contribute to decision-making—if these students are assisted to develop the skills required, and selection processes are open and well publicised.
- Separate youth and disability forums (associated with existing initiatives) may provide a mechanism for student input on issues relating to disability and education.

Suggestions to assist students with disabilities to be more involved in policy and decision-making processes, particularly those related to education, are included in the recommendations of the report.

Social Inclusion

In 2003, the Minister for Education and Children's Services requested a project be undertaken on social inclusion, as a contribution to the State Government's Social Inclusion Initiative. The project would focus on children and students with disabilities attending preschools and schools in South Australia, and the extent of cross-portfolio services available to them and their families.

A questionnaire was developed to survey all preschools and schools in this State (n=1,134). A total of 564 responses were received, which represents an overall response rate of 50 percent. The survey sample was comparable with the total population on Statewide sector distribution, country/metropolitan and preschool/school representation, as well as the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in the education sectors. The comparability of these variables and the substantial sample size (50%) provide a level of confidence to generalise the findings of the study.

Although preschools and schools interpret social inclusion variously, their commitment to the underlying principle of collaboration is evident. Generally, schools interpret social inclusion in terms of policies related to disability, equity and student welfare. The data raise the question of whether school based staff are adequately informed and knowledgeable of the principles underpinning the State Government's Social Inclusion Initiative. It may be timely for schools to have access to published information on social inclusion policy and practice.

The benefits of cross-portfolio service provision to students with disabilities, their families and school staff were demonstrated. The data highlight cooperation as a prerequisite for collaboration, and emphasise the complexity and inter-relatedness of service delivery for students with disabilities. Opportunities for cross-portfolio collaboration were identified alongside barriers that relate to availability and accessibility of information and service. One of the underlying principles of social inclusion practice recognises the connections between disadvantaging factors such as the barriers identified. It may be necessary to revisit protocols for effective collaboration, to ensure cross-portfolio services are sufficiently available and effectively allocated.

At this time, data analysis and reporting is continuing. It is anticipated the final report will be completed by May 2004.

Commonwealth/State Special Education Grants



Each year, the Minister for Education and Children's Services is responsible for the allocation of Commonwealth/State Special Education Grants to eligible organisations providing education, therapeutic and other essential services for children and students with disabilities in South Australia. Eligible non-government organisations may apply for both Capital Grants and Recurrent Grants under the Commonwealth *Special Education – Non-Government Centre Support* programme. These grants constitute supplementary funding for eligible organisations that provide support for children and students with disabilities in early intervention programs, preschools and schools (see Appendix 1 for a list of organisations that were allocated Recurrent Grants for the school year 2004).

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities is also responsible for administering the allocation of Commonwealth Special Education Capital Grants to non-government organisations (see Appendix 2 for a list of organisations that were allocated Capital Grants for school years 2003 and 2004).

Appendix 1— Commonwealth/State Special Education Recurrent Grants 2004

| Organisation | Total \$ | State \$ | Commonwealth \$ |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Autism Association Early Intervention | 226,517 | 0 | 226,517 |
| Autism Association School Support | 788,940 | 0 | 788,940 |
| Crippled Children's Early Intervention | 219,865 | 0 | 219,865 |
| Crippled Children's School Support | 663,738 | 0 | 663,738 |
| Down Syndrome Early Intervention | 123,019 | 0 | 123,019 |
| Down Syndrome School Support | 291,844 | 0 | 291,844 |
| Cora Barclay Early Intervention | 59,547 | 0 | 59,547 |
| Cora Barclay School Support | 148,321 | 0 | 148,321 |
| Townsend House Early Intervention | 82,885 | 0 | 82,885 |
| Townsend House School Support | 74,924 | 0 | 74,924 |
| Guide Dogs Association | 29,773 | 0 | 29,773 |
| Miriam High Special Needs Centre (EI) | 76,451 | 0 | 76,451 |
| Inclusion SA Early Intervention ¹ | 199,798 | 0 | 199,798 |
| Early Links Early Intervention ¹ | 40,134 | 0 | 40,134 |
| Lower Eyre Peninsula Early Intervention Support Program | 10,000 | 0 | 10,000 |
| Goodwood Early Development Program | 25,000 | 0 | 25,000 |
| St Ann's Special School | 320,055 | 320,055 | 0 |
| St Patrick's Special School | 263,905 | 263,905 | 0 |
| Suneden Special School | 252,675 | 252,675 | 0 |
| Child and Youth Health Access Assistant Program | 2,000,000 | 1,192,406 | 807,594 |
| DECS Preschool Support Program | 1,102,959 | 1,102,959 | 0 |
| Family and Youth Services | 70,650 | 0 | 70,650 |
| Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support | 40,000 | 40,000 | 0 |
| Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities | 210,000 | 0 | 210,000 |
| Total Amount | \$7,321,000 | \$3,172,000 | \$4,149,000 |

¹ Inclusion SA and Early Links are new applicants for Commonwealth Special Education Recurrent Grants in 2004.

Appendix 2— Commonwealth Special Education Capital Grants 2003 & 2004

| Organisation | Total \$ |
|---|------------------|
| 2003 | |
| Autism Association of South Australia Inc | 44,861 |
| Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated | 112,350 |
| <i>Total Amount</i> | <i>\$157,211</i> |
| 2004 | |
| Crippled Children's Association of South Australia Incorporated | 28,110 |
| <i>Total Amount</i> | <i>\$28,110</i> |

Appendix 3— Committee/Task Group Membership

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Members

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Ms Diana Hill | Chairperson |
| Mr Richard Dalefield | Deputy Chairperson |
| Ms Mary Bambacas | Parent |
| Ms Elizabeth Barber | Australian Association of Special Education Inc |
| Ms Libby Burns | Association of Independent Schools of South Australia |
| Ms Christel Butcher | Children's Services Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Claire Cotton | Non government Special Education Committee |
| Mrs Christine Flynn | Parent |
| Ms Stephanie Grant | Catholic Education SA |
| Ms Jude Jones | Australian Early Childhood Association (SA Branch) |
| Mr Adrian Murray | Schooling sector Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Sheena Ruedas | Association of Non-Government Education Employees |
| Ms Tricia Spargo | Student |
| Ms Veronica Watkins | Disability Services Office, Department of Human Services |
| Ms Margaret Wallace | Minister's Nominee |
| Ms Leah York | Australian Education Union |

Appendix 3— Committee/Task Group Membership (cont)

Secretariat Staff

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Ms Margaret McColl | Executive Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Rosanne DeBats | Project Officer |
| Ms Luisa Pirone | Project Officer |
| Ms Jo Shearer | Project Officer |
| Ms Lyn Kohl | Executive Secretary |

Appendix 3— Committee/Task Group Membership (cont)

● Behaviour Management: A Whole-School Approach

Members

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Mr Adrian Murray | Chairperson Schooling sector Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Cynthia Betterman | Parent Advocacy |
| Ms Christel Butcher | Children's Services Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Mr Greg Cox | Policy Advisor: Student Behaviour Management Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Mr Richard Dalefield | Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Chris Drynan | Special Schools Principals' Association |
| Ms Judy Gray | Autism Association |
| Mr Phil Lewis | Behaviour Education Team Catholic Education SA |
| Ms Nicole McDowell | Association of Independent Schools of South Australia |
| Ms Sheena Ruedas | Association of Non-Government Education Employees |
| Ms Margaret McColl | Executive Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Jo Shearer | Project Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |

Appendix 3— Committee/Task Group Membership (cont)

● Hearing Student Voices

Members

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Ms Tricia Spargo | Chairperson Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Elizabeth Barber | Australian Association of Special Education Inc |
| Ms Leonie Challans | Regional Disability Liaison Officer (SA) University of South Australia |
| Ms Christine Flynn | Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Mr Ben Galvin | Student |
| Ms Janette Miller | Catholic Education SA |
| Mr Ryan Neville | Student |
| Ms Pam Oyarzun | Association of Independent Schools of South Australia |
| Ms Joanna Seymour | Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Margaret McColl | Executive Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Mr Rosanne DeBats | Project Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |

Appendix 3— Committee/Task Group Membership (cont)

● Social Inclusion

Members

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Ms Margaret Wallace | Chairperson Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Mary Bambacas | Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Libby Burns | Association of Independent Schools of South Australia |
| Mr Maurice Corcoran | Division of Strategic Planning and Policy (Disability) Department of Human Services |
| Ms Claire Cotton | Non government Special Education Committee |
| Ms Stephanie Grant | Catholic Education SA |
| Ms Jude Jones | Australian Early Childhood Association (SA Branch) |
| Ms Debbie Moyle | Aboriginal Education Unit Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Tania Toth | Social Inclusion Unit |
| Ms Chrisann Tsapaliaris | Multicultural Advocacy & Liaison Service of South Australia (MALSSA) |
| Ms Julie White | Learning Improvement and Support Services Department of Education and Children's Services |
| Ms Leah York | Australian Education Union |
| Ms Margaret McColl | Executive Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |
| Ms Jo Shearer | Project Officer Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities |

