



**Government
of South Australia**

**Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities**

Annual Report 2007

February 2008

Further information about the Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities is available on the Website at:
<http://www.macswd.sa.gov.au>

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1. Introduction

Role and Purpose

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC:SWD) was established by the South Australian Minister for Education and Children's Services in 1989. The role and purpose of the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities is to:

- Ensure the equitable, transparent and accountable distribution of Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support grants (Capital and Recurrent) for supplementary funding to eligible organisations, which support the education and care of children and students with a disability in early intervention programs, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Ensure the equitable, transparent and accountable distribution of State Government supplementary funding to support the education and care of children and students with a disability across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Support the capacity of non-government organisations to provide services to children and students with a disability in early intervention programs, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia.
- Undertake projects and provide support on matters concerning the education and care of children and students with a disability as requested by the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

Context Statement

Our Vision

Children and students with a disability achieve in their learning communities; acquiring skills and attitudes for life-long learning and citizenship.

Our Mission

To ensure equitable and efficient allocation of Australian and State Government grants for supplementary funding to eligible organisations providing education and education related therapy services to children and students with a disability across the three education sectors, and to support our stakeholders on matters concerning the education and care of children and students with a disability.

Our Values

Respect	Our behaviour recognises the values, diversity and contribution of individuals.
Diligence	We are careful and persistent in our application and effort and strive for continuous improvement.
Integrity	We act honestly and ethically.
Fairness	We are unbiased and impartial in all our undertakings.
Transparency	Our systems and decision making processes are understandable and open to scrutiny.
Connectedness	Our work is relevant to and supportive of our stakeholders.
Accountability	We are accountable for our decisions and actions.

Committee Membership

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Standing Committee

Members of the Committee are appointed by the Minister for Education and Children's Services to serve a twelve-month term, although in some instances this term is extended. They are chosen for their knowledge and experience in relation to children and students with a disability. Committee members consist of educators representing the three education sectors; parents; health and disability professionals; a student; and nominees of the Minister for Education and Children's Services, education unions and professional associations.

As a rule the Standing Committee meets once a month, with the exception of January and April. In 2007 the Committee met eight times.

Membership

Ms Margaret Wallace	Chairperson
Dr Mary Bambacas	Deputy Chairperson
Ms Ingrid Alderton	Schooling Sector, Department of Education and Children's Services
Ms Erica Baker	Independent Education Union (SA)
Mr Clive Budden	Australian Education Union (SA Branch)
Ms Libby Burns	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
Ms Claire Cotton	Non-Government Special Education Committee
Ms Stephanie Grant	Catholic Education SA
Ms Marie Hedley	Minister's Nominee, Parent
Ms Cathie Home	Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch)
Ms Pam Jacobs	Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) SA Chapter
Dr Brian Matthews	Minister's Nominee
Ms Tanya Mills	Minister's Nominee, Aboriginal Students with Disabilities
Ms Zofia Nowak	Office for Disability and Client Services, Department for Families and Communities
Mr Dindo Varona	Minister's Nominee, Student
Ms Heather Ward	Early Years, Department of Education and Children's Services

Funding Approval Group

The Funding Approval Group, a subgroup of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, oversees the annual funding process. Final decisions about funding recommendations are made by the Standing Committee.

Funding Approval Group members for 2007 were:

- Ms Margaret Wallace, MAC:SWD Chairperson
- Dr Mary Bambacas, MAC:SWD Deputy Chairperson
- Ms Libby Burns, Representative for the Association of Independent Schools of SA (AISSA)
- Ms Stephanie Grant, Representative for Catholic Education SA (CESA)
- Ms Ingrid Alderton, Representative for the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)
- Dr Brian Matthews, Minister for Education and Children's Services Nominee.

Funding Approval Group non-members for 2007 were:

- Ms Christel Butcher, MAC:SWD Executive Officer
- Ms Betty Tsoutouras, MAC:SWD Project Officer (Funding)
- Ms Chris Williams, DECS Assistant Director Accounting and Financial Management Improvement

Additionally members of the Standing Committee may be asked to attend Funding Approval Group meetings when necessary. Funding Approval Group meetings usually precede the Standing Committee meetings. In 2007 the Funding Approval Group met ten times.

Secretariat Staff

Ms Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Ms Lyn Kohl	Executive Secretary
Ms Luisa Pirone	Project Officer (Funding) until July 2007
Ms Betty Tsoutouras	Project Officer (Funding) from July 2007
Ms Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Ms Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer

2. Funding

Overview of Funding Process

Australian/State Government Grants

The Minister for Education and Children's Services is responsible for the allocation of Australian/State Government Special Education grants to eligible organisations providing education and therapy related services for children and students with a disability in South Australia. Eligible non-government organisations can apply for both Capital Grants and Recurrent Grants under the Non-Government Centres Support element of the Australian Government *Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme (Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004)*.

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC:SWD) administers the allocation of Australian Government Capital and Recurrent Grants to non-government organisations on behalf of the agent for the Australian Government; in South Australia this is the Minister for Education and Children's Services. In addition to allocating these Australian Government funds on behalf of the Minister, the Committee administers State Recurrent Grants available to support children and students with a disability.

Allocative Mechanism

Australian Government Recurrent Grants

For non-government organisations receiving Australian Government *Non-Government Centres Support* Recurrent Grants, allocations are calculated using MAC:SWD's funding formula, which was developed in 1999 following a review of the funding process, and has been applied since 2000.

Exceptions are made in three cases. Base grants are allocated to the Department for Families and Communities' *Families SA Tutoring Program for Children in Residential Care* to be used for tutoring services for students with a disability over one school term, as well as to two small early intervention programs.

For those organisations funded under the formula, the allocation process is based on MAC:SWD's three Categories for Funding, which identify the level of child/student need, irrespective of the nature of disability. Each of these categories for funding has weightings assigned to Early Intervention and School Support programs. Funds are allocated according to Categories 1 to 3 in descending order of priority. Within these categories, MAC:SWD has identified certain services as indicators of curriculum based support provided by organisations. The number of hours attached to an individual's service provision determines the category in which each child/student is placed for funding purposes.

Each year, organisations applying for Australian Government *Non-Government Centres Support* Recurrent Grants submit a written application to MAC:SWD, outlining child/student numbers and the levels of need and types of service negotiated with the relevant education sectors. The data provided represent services provided in the preceding year, and are verified by education sector representatives who are members of MAC:SWD, before being applied to the funding formula. Data for early intervention services are verified by officers of MAC:SWD.

Per capita amounts for all organisations are equal across MAC:SWD's three categories of funding, i.e. the same per capita amount applies to all grant recipients for children in Early Intervention categories 1, 2 and 3 and students in School Support categories 1, 2 and 3. The recipient's total grant will comprise subtotal funding for children and students across Early Intervention and/or School Support categories 1, 2 and 3, with students in priority category 1 attracting the highest per capita amounts. Stakeholders continue to support this transparent and equitable distribution of supplementary recurrent funding.

Grant allocations fluctuate on an annual basis, according to the total Australian Government allocation and the level of service provided to individual children and students in each of the organisations funded. The funding provided is targeted to provide learning and development opportunities for children with a disability who are below school age to prepare them for entry into preschools or schools, to assist school-aged children with a disability by improving their access to educational programs, and to assist children with a disability in residential care.

State Recurrent Grants

Two programs were eligible for State Government Special Education funding in 2007, namely the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service Access Assistant Program and the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program.

The Access Assistant Program supports children with severe physical disability and/or complex health care needs in preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia. Without this program many children would not be able to attend their neighbourhood school, but would need to stay in hospital. The South Australian government now wholly funds the program; in 2007 the program received \$2,182,500.

MAC:SWD administers the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support funding on behalf of the three education sectors in South Australia. This funding provides school based support for children and students during a period of unexpected need, often due to complex health support on return to school after hospitalisation. An amount of \$45,000 was allocated to support this program in 2007.

Recurrent Grant Allocations

Recurrent Grants must contribute to the provision of education and therapy related services by non-government organisations to improve the access and participation of children and students with a disability in early intervention programs, preschools and schools. These grants are supplementary to organisations' total program costs and are intended to support education based services.

The Minister receives the Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support funding to be allocated along with State Special Education funding. The Australian Government's allocation for South Australia in 2007 was \$4,157,000. The Australian/State Government total amount allocated in 2007 was \$6,802,844.

The following table lists those organisations/programs that received recurrent grants in 2007:

- 10 non-government organisations offering early intervention and/or school support programs
- the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service Access Assistant Program
- Department for Families and Communities' Families SA *Tutoring Program for Children in Residential Care* (CIRC)
- the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program.

STATE & AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SPECIAL EDUCATION GRANTS
Allocated for 2007

State Government Recurrent Grant for January to December 2007	\$ Amount	
Children, Youth & Women's Health Service Access Assistant Program	2,182,500	
Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support	45,000	TOTAL \$2,227,500

Australian Government Recurrent Grant for January to December 2007	\$ Amount	
Autism SA	Early Intervention	239,608
	School Support	1,327,114
		1,566,722
Novita Children's Services	Early Intervention	228,134
	School Support	727,436
		955,570
Down Syndrome Society	Early Intervention	135,814
	School Support	325,462
		461,276
Cora Barclay Centre	Early Intervention	64,570
	School Support	165,612
		230,182
Townsend House	Early Intervention	111,228
	School Support	150,602
		261,830
Guide Dogs Association	School Support	34,966
Miriam High Special Needs Centre	Early Intervention	71,654
Inclusive Directions	Early Intervention	476,056
Port Lincoln Community Health Services Early Intervention and Support Program		10,000
Early Development Program (Seaton)		25,000
Families SA Children in Residential Care Tutoring Program		29,680
Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (operating grant)		244,558
		Total \$4,367,494

Australian Government Capital Grant for January to December 2007	\$ Amount	
Autism SA	50,000	
Novita Children's Services (balance of capital grant awarded in 2006)	75,000	
Down Syndrome Society	11,000	
Townsend House	30,000	
Inclusive Directions	17,393	
Port Lincoln Community Health Services Early Intervention and Support Program	14,457	
Early Development Program (Seaton)	10,000	Total \$207,850
		TOTAL \$6,802,844

Australian Government Capital Grant Allocations

Five per cent of the total Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support allocation to South Australia is intended for Capital Grants to eligible organisations supporting children and students with a disability. These grants are allocated to non-government organisations for the construction or refurbishment of facilities that provide education and therapy related services to improve the access and participation of children and students with a disability. Organisations applying for a capital grant must submit a written application, to be assessed by the Funding Approval Group and the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

The following table lists the non-government organisations allocated capital grants in 2007.

Australian Government Non-Government Centres Support Capital Grants

2007	Novita Children's Services	\$75,000
	Autism SA	\$50,000
	Townsend House	\$30,000
	Down Syndrome Society	\$11,000
	Inclusive Directions	\$17,393
	Port Lincoln Community Health Services Early Intervention and Support Program	\$14,457
	Early Development Program (Seaton)	\$10,000
	Total	\$207,850

Conditions of Funding

When a Capital and/or Recurrent Grant is approved, the organisation must enter into a legally binding Funding Agreement with the Minister for Education and Children's Services to ensure the grant is properly applied. The organisation is required to provide a number of reports, accountability statements and whatever other information the Minister might require, under the terms and conditions of the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* or the clauses contained in the Funding Agreement. At the end of the funding period, the organisation needs to meet specific financial accountability requirements contained in the Funding Agreement.

Number of Students Supported during the 2006/2007 financial year¹

Funding to non-government organisations is allocated retrospectively, based on service provision to children and students in the preceding year. Data recording service provision were collected over four terms, i.e. Terms 3 and 4 2006 and Terms 1 and 2 2007. Averaged over the four terms, 2608 children and students were supported through Early Intervention programs and the School Support programs. The Children, Youth and Women's Health Service's Access Assistant Program provided support to 254 children and students with a disability. Additionally, 47 children and students were supported through the crisis care program. There was a significant increase of children and students with autism spectrum disorder and children with disabilities in childcare.

¹ Numbers of children and students supported are based on services provided during Terms 3 & 4 2006 and 1 & 2 2007. Funding allocations to organisations are based on these data.

AVERAGE PROGRAM NUMBERS based on service provision from Term 3 2006 to Term 2 2007 data		
Autism SA Early Intervention	202	
Autism SA School Support	711	913
Novita Children's Services Early Intervention	205	
Novita Children's Services School Support	400	605
Down Syndrome Society Early Intervention	53	
Down Syndrome Society School Support	113	166
Cora Barclay Centre Early Intervention	39	
Cora Barclay Centre School Support	93	132
Townsend House Early Intervention	95	
Townsend House School Support	63	158
Guide Dogs Association School Support	28	
Children in Residential Care (CIRC)	66	
PLCHS Early Intervention and Support Program	18	
Early Development Program (Seaton)	14	
Miriam High Special Needs Centre Early Intervention	39	
Inclusive Directions Early Intervention	469	
TOTAL	2608	

3. 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 Committee.

All projects focus on children and students with a disability and are relevant to the three education sectors, i.e. State, Catholic and Independent preschools and schools. Project groups are formed for each project and members are chosen for their experience and expertise in the particular topic. One project was conducted in 2007 and, once approved by the Minister, a report will be available on the Committee's website. A summary of the project is provided below.

Early Childhood Transition for Children with a Disability—Home, Childcare, Preschool, School: Focusing on Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting

This year, the Committee undertook a project to investigate transition practices for young children with a disability from home to care, preschool and school, with a focus on the newly established Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting as examples of the model of integrated early childhood services.

The aim of the project was to identify which transition model supports the integrated delivery of early childhood care and education services for children with a disability, taking into consideration the role of disability agencies that provide consultancy to these services.

The project officers conducted a review of relevant literature, face-to-face interviews with individuals and groups, site visits to integrated settings and collected case studies to illustrate effective transition processes and practices. Interviews took place with:

- the directors of the five established DECS Children's Centres, staff from integrated schools (i.e. with a preschool on site) in the Catholic and Independent sectors and staff from special preschool settings for children with a disability
- staff from disability agencies that provide early childhood intervention and school support services for children with a disability and their families
- education staff responsible for the provision of disability services and consultancy to preschools and schools from the three education sectors, to provide information on current service structures and processes used at times of transition
- personnel associated with the development of the South Australian Children's Centres, to better understand the background and vision for these centres.

The data collected through this project indicated that the Children's Centres model of integrated early childhood care and education represents a strong model for working in partnership. Many respondents saw the Children's Centres as an opportunity to provide a one-stop-shop for services to support children and their families, with the potential for smooth transition across services as children developed. They recognised that parents of children with a disability valued having a core group of staff at the one site with whom they can share information and discuss their children's needs.

The opportunity to work with children from a much younger age at the Children's Centres increased staff opportunities to identify children's developmental issues earlier and initiate timely early intervention and family support, when families had not accessed these services previously. From the Children's Centres directors' perspective, there were multiple advantages in being able to access both the Inclusion Support Program for children with a disability in childcare provided through Inclusive Directions, as well as the DECS Preschool Support Program for those in preschool.

Directors welcomed the proposal of regular access to non-government disability agencies for families at their centres, to provide advice on the development of negotiated curriculum plans and to provide therapy services for the children with a disability attending the centre.

Discussions regarding the involvement of disability services had begun with representatives of some organisations, but the details of their accommodation and frequency of service were yet to be determined. Staff of disability agencies interviewed were unable to comment fully on their experience of providing consultancy services for children at these centres, because the centres were relatively new at the time of interviewing, and they knew of only a few children enrolled at the centres.

Project Group Membership

Chairperson

Dr Brian Matthews	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, <i>Minister's Nominee</i>
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Members

Margaret Wallace	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, <i>Chairperson</i>
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Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer
Christel Butcher	Executive Officer

4. Activities in 2007

Committee Leadership and Secretariat Staffing

There were no changes in the Committee's leadership during 2007. Ms Margaret Wallace continued as Chairperson, with Dr Mary Bambacas as Deputy Chairperson.

Ms Luisa Pirone (Project Officer, Funding) resigned from her position in July 2007 and was replaced by Ms Betty Tsoutouras.

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities-Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss

The Minister was presented with the three volume report on Aboriginal Students with Disabilities: Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss in April 2007.

The Minister requested that an 'Overview' be developed to be presented for discussion to other ministers and chief executives of the three education sectors.

At the request of the Minister, the 'Overview' was sent to the Hon John Hill MP, Minister for Health, in September 2007 to initiate discussions about the findings of the report and possible collaborative interventions between education and health services to address otitis media and subsequent conductive hearing loss in Aboriginal children and students. As a result, both departments agreed to undertake several short- and medium term strategies. It was further agreed that the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities will conduct a pilot project in the northern suburbs of Adelaide in 2008 regarding conductive hearing loss in Aboriginal children. Aboriginal families with young children, who have been identified with a conductive hearing loss, will be supported to connect with early learning educational programs through closer collaboration between health care providers and educators.

5. Future

Projects for 2008

Three projects have been approved by the Minister.

Families' experiences of childcare services for their child with a disability

Increasingly, families of children with a disability seek the services of a childcare centre for care of their child with a disability. At present approximately five hundred children with a disability are supported to access childcare. The Committee is aware that there might be differences in the service provision to children who have been identified with a disability at birth, to those whose difficulties only become apparent over time and need further investigation before being identified with a disability.

This project aims to investigate the trend of children with a disability attending childcare, the enrolment and transition processes for families, staff knowledge and training requirements, and the involvement of disability agencies, in particular the non-government disability agencies, to support families' access and their children's inclusion in the centres' programs.

Implementation of the Otitis Media Information Strategy

Both Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) and the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) are aware of the Aboriginal Students with Disabilities: Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss report and recommendations.

The Committee will continue to work with DECS, CYWHS and other health care providers to set up implementation strategies recommended in the report, particularly establishing a pilot project in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. CYWHS and Muna Paiendi would be potential partners in the project. It is envisaged that DECS programs—such as the Learning Together Program and Early Learning Program—childcare centres and preschools could also be involved.

Review of the funding formula and processes

It is proposed to undertake a project during the 2008 year with the aim to review the Committee's funding formula and associated processes. Given that the current funding quadrennium ceases at the end of 2008, the Funding Approval Group considered it was timely to review the formula used in allocating recurrent grants to non-government organisations before the start of the new quadrennium 2009–2012. During the 2008 funding allocation process it became evident to MAC:SWD that the current formula in the current climate was not suitable due to some key variables, e.g. the amount in monetary terms available to allocate. Given this reduction coupled with an increase in student numbers and a marked increase in the early intervention numbers, it is timely to review the funding process.

MAC:SWD plans to take a holistic approach in the review of the formula, including investigating trends and potential pressures. In addition, it is anticipated that during 2008 negotiations will also take place between the Australian Government and states and territories for the next funding quadrennium. There will be an opportunity to provide comment and feedback during these negotiations in determining the new funding quadrennium allocations.

