



**Government
of South Australia**

**Ministerial Advisory Committee:
Students with Disabilities**

Annual Report 2008

January 2009

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 Commonwealth 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.

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 Commonwealth 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 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, education unions and professional associations.

As a rule the Standing Committee meets once a month, with the exception of January and April. In 2008 the Committee met ten times.

Membership 2008

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
Mr Maurice Corcoran	Office for Disability and Client Services
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 Kim Morey	Minister's Nominee, Aboriginal Students with Disabilities
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 2008 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 Nominee.

Funding Approval Group non-members for 2008 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 2008 the Funding Approval Group met ten times.

Secretariat Staff

Ms Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Ms Lyn Kohl	Executive Secretary until February 2008
Ms Jenny Knight	Temporary Executive Secretary since March 2008
Ms Betty Tsoutouras	Project Officer (Funding)
Ms Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Ms Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer

2. Funding

Overview of Funding Process

Commonwealth/State Government Grants

The Minister for Education is responsible for the allocation of Commonwealth/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 have been able to apply for both Capital Grants and Recurrent Grants under the Non-Government Centres Support element of the Commonwealth 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 Commonwealth Government Capital and Recurrent Grants to non-government organisations on behalf of the agent for the Commonwealth Government; in South Australia this is the Minister for Education. In addition to allocating these Commonwealth Government funds on behalf of the Minister, the Committee administers State Recurrent Grants available to support children and students with a disability.

Allocative Mechanism

Commonwealth Government Recurrent Grants

For non-government organisations receiving Commonwealth 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.

Each year, organisations applying for Commonwealth 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.

For those organisations funded under the formula, the allocation process has in the past been 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. 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. 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. As the grant allocation from the Commonwealth Government had remained at the same level for some time, funding for 2008 was based on the same proportion of funding organisations had received in 2007.

Grant allocations fluctuate on an annual basis, as they depend on 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 2008, 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 school, but would need to stay in hospital. The South Australian Government now wholly funds the program; in 2008 the program received \$2,287,000.

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 2008.

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 Commonwealth Government Non-Government Centres Support funding to be allocated along with State Special Education funding. The Commonwealth Government's allocation for South Australia in 2008 was \$4,157,000. Further to that, approval was given to allocate unspent capital grants funding for calendar year 2007 amounting to \$4,739 to the total funding for calendar year 2008, bringing it to a total of \$4,161,739. The Commonwealth/State Government total amount allocated in 2008 was \$6,493,739.

The following table lists those organisations/programs that received recurrent grants in 2008:

- 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 & COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SPECIAL EDUCATION GRANTS
Allocated for 2008**

State Government Recurrent Grant for January to December 2008	\$ Amount	
Children, Youth & Women's Health Service Access Assistant Program	2,287,000	
Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support	45,000	TOTAL \$2,332,000

Commonwealth Government Recurrent Grant for January to December 2008		\$ Amount	
Autism SA	Early Intervention	218,026	
	School Support	1,207,576	1,425,602
Novita Children's Services	Early Intervention	207,585	
	School Support	661,914	869,499
Down Syndrome Society	Early Intervention	123,581	
	School Support	296,146	419,727
Cora Barclay Centre	Early Intervention	58,754	
	School Support	150,695	209,449
Townsend House	Early Intervention	101,208	
	School Support	137,038	238,246
Guide Dogs Association	School Support	31,816	
Miriam High Special Needs Centre	Early Intervention	65,200	
Inclusive Directions	Early Intervention	433,176	
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		30,000	
Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (operating grant)		268,824	Total \$4,026,539

Commonwealth Government Capital Grant for January to December 2008		\$ Amount	
Cora Barclay Centre		49,500	
Townsend House		40,000	
Port Lincoln Community Health Services		45,700	Total \$135,200
			TOTAL \$4,161,739

Total Amount allocated \$6,493,739

Commonwealth Government Capital Grant Allocations

Five per cent of the total Commonwealth 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 2008.

Commonwealth Government Non-Government Centres Support Capital Grants

2008	Cora Barclay Centre	\$49,500
	Townsend House	\$40,000
	Port Lincoln Community Health Services Early Intervention and Support Program	\$45,700
	Total	\$135,200

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 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 2007/2008 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 2007 and Terms 1 and 2 2008. Averaged over the four terms, 2660 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 274 children and students with a disability. Additionally, 33 children and students were supported through the crisis care program. There was a significant increase of children with a disabilities supported in childcare.

¹ Numbers of children and students supported are based on services provided during Terms 3 & 4 2007 and 1 & 2 2008. Funding allocations to organisations are based on these data.

AVERAGE PROGRAM NUMBERS based on service provision from Term 3 2007 to Term 2 2008 data		
Autism SA Early Intervention	246	
Autism SA School Support	654	900
Novita Children's Services Early Intervention	236	
Novita Children's Services School Support	401	637
Down Syndrome Society Early Intervention	44	
Down Syndrome Society School Support	105	149
Cora Barclay Centre Early Intervention	40	
Cora Barclay Centre School Support	98	138
Townsend House Early Intervention	100	
Townsend House School Support	61	161
Guide Dogs Association Early Intervention	1	
Guide Dogs Association School Support	36	37
Children in Residential Care (CIRC)	33	
PLCHS Early Intervention and Support Program	18	
Early Development Program (Seaton)	12	
Miriam High Special Needs Centre Early Intervention	39	
Inclusive Directions Early Intervention	536	
TOTAL	2660	

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. 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 convened for each project and members are chosen for their experience and expertise in the particular topic. Three projects were conducted in 2008 and, once approved by the Minister, relevant reports will be available on the Committee's website. Summaries of the projects are provided below.

Families' Experience of Childcare for their Child with a Disability

This year, the Committee undertook a project to investigate families' experience of child care services for their child with a disability or additional needs.

The aim of the project was to

- record the experiences of parents and their children (aged less than six years)
- identify and describe exemplary practices in child care for this cohort
- describe the interface of disability and community health agencies with child care services.

Multiple methods were used to collect data, including questionnaires, telephone and face to face interviews. In summary

- All families of children with a disability or additional needs, (whose care provider accessed Commonwealth Government support to include their child in care during 2007 and to the end of March 2008 [N=666]), were surveyed using a purpose designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed by mail with the option of written or electronic response, and 178 responses (27%) were received.
- Disability and community health services were surveyed using a separate purpose designed questionnaire, which was distributed by email. The agencies surveyed were Novita Children's Services, Down Syndrome Society, Townsend House/CanDo4Kids, Disability SA, Cora Barclay Centre, Autism SA, Central Northern Adelaide Health Service, Southern Adelaide Health Service, Children Youth and Women's Health Service and Country Health SA. Responses were received from all agencies.
- As a component of the families' questionnaire, parents were asked to rate their experience of child care for themselves and their child separately. Seventy-four parents (43%) indicated an 'excellent' experience for both their child and themselves and forty of these families provided their contact details for further follow-up. After reviewing the responses, four mothers of families who received excellent child care services were interviewed by telephone and their care providers interviewed face-to-face about their provision of exemplary child care services.

Early analysis of this data indicates high family satisfaction with child care services. 90 per cent of families reported a positive experience for their child and approximately 80 per cent of families reported a positive experience for themselves as parents. Approximately half of the families accessed child care so the parents could go to work and almost as many accessed care for respite. A further 25 per cent accessed care to enhance their child's development through social interaction with their child's peers.

Parents' qualitative comments were further analysed. The concern of those parents who expressed dissatisfaction was mostly related to communication from staff about their child's wellbeing at care, and the

approach of the director when enrolling their child, which was not as supportive or encouraging as they would have expected. In addition, the staff of these services appeared not to be trained or well experienced in caring for children with a disability or additional needs.

Inclusive Directions and Novita Children's Services are the South Australian Inclusion Support Agencies responsible for the administration of the Commonwealth Government's Inclusion Support Program. Families commented positively about the support provided through these agencies. In addition, disability and community health agencies worked with child care providers in varying ways providing consultancy to include children with a disability or additional needs at care.

Project Group Membership

<i>Co-Chairpersons</i>	
<i>Cathie Home</i>	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch) representative
<i>Linda Williams</i>	Novita Children's Services Manager, Early Childhood Services
<i>Members</i>	
<i>Gloria Debba</i>	Parent representative
<i>Joan Gilbert</i>	Café Enfield Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting, Director
<i>Stephanie Grant</i>	Catholic Education SA
<i>Tina Quitadamo</i>	Network SA/Aboriginal Resource and Management Support Unit (ARMSU), Indigenous Inclusion Consultant
<i>Heather Ward</i>	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, Department of Education and Children's Services, Early Years representative
<i>Sheryle Yorsten</i>	St Peter's College – Junior School Early Learning Centre Coordinator
<i>Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities</i>	
Jo Shearer	Project Officer
Christel Butcher	Executive Officer

Aboriginal Students with Disabilities - Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss (OM/CHL Pilot Project)

The pilot project was borne out of recommendation 2 of the *Aboriginal Students with Disabilities: Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss* report (March 2007) produced by the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities. Recommendation 2 "supported a collaborative early intervention approach by health, early childhood and education services to ameliorate speech and language difficulties, behavioural difficulties and other issues that may arise from otitis media and conductive hearing loss in young Aboriginal children."

At the end of 2007 the Minister for Education and Children's Services invited the Minister for Health and senior Children, Youth and Women's Health Service staff to comment upon and discuss the findings and implementation of MAC: SWD's *Aboriginal Students with Disabilities: Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss* report. As a result of these discussions, it was agreed that the two agencies would work collaboratively to implement a pilot project supporting Aboriginal families with young children aged from birth to three who were at risk of or had conductive hearing loss. One of the aims was to support families to connect with early learning educational programs through closer collaboration between health care providers and educators. The northern suburbs of Adelaide were identified as a priority location for such a project.

A project working party comprising representatives from MAC:SWD, DECS and Muna Paiendi Health Service was established and began consultations about the scope of this project with the Aboriginal and wider community in the northern suburbs. The community were very supportive of raising awareness about hearing loss and its impact on education. However, they were cautious about a pilot project that would cease, and more interested in something that could be ongoing.

It was decided to work together with the newly appointed Aboriginal community development coordinator of the Kurna Plains Children's Centre to support Aboriginal families affected by otitis media and conductive hearing loss in a playgroup at the centre. Due to space restrictions and building work at Kurna Plains, this would not be possible until early 2009. After consultations with community and staff, it was agreed to develop a resource package for Aboriginal families and playgroups concerning the impact of otitis media and conductive hearing loss in the meantime.

The main focus of the package would be a booklet of play activities focussing on listening and talking activities for children from birth to age three. The community and professional staff proposed the development of a complementary DVD featuring interviews of Aboriginal community members affected by conductive hearing loss, documentary footage promoting ear and hearing health and examples of some of the play activities.

Twenty-five activities have been selected for the activity book and are the result of a detailed consultation process, which has included input from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, including community speech pathologists, teachers of the deaf, early intervention hearing impaired teachers, university staff, early childhood professionals and Aboriginal families. The project officer has worked very closely with the community development coordinator to produce the activity booklet and the DVD, both of which are near completion. It is envisaged that the activities will be trialled at a few locations including Kurna Plains Children's Centre in 2009 and all feedback from families and early childhood staff will be used to enhance the resource. It is also envisaged that some training and development will accompany the promotion of the resource.

The evolution of the pilot project resulting in a resource package has assisted with the implementation of all three recommendations made in the *Aboriginal Students with Disabilities: Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss* report (March 2007):

- Raise awareness of parents and facilitate understanding of the social, emotional and educational impacts of conductive hearing loss;
- Support a collaborative early childhood intervention approach by health, early childhood and education services to ameliorate speech and language difficulties, behavioural difficulties and other issues that may arise from otitis media and conductive hearing loss in young Aboriginal children;
- Support the collation and distribution of information for early childhood carers, educators and education support staff to provide support to Aboriginal children and students with or at risk of conductive hearing loss.

Project Group Membership

Chairperson	
Kim Morey	Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities
Members	
Fionna Bottroff	Speech Pathologist, Muna Paiendi Community Health Centre
Amanda Connor	Teacher of the Deaf, Early Intervention Service – Hearing Impaired (SERU)
Marina Elliott	Early Childhood Initiatives Coordinator, Kumangka Para District, DECS
Megan Hickman	Community Development Officer, Kurna Plains Children's Centre
Chris Olsen	Hearing Impairment Coordinator, Kumangka Para District, DECS
<u>Contributors</u>	
Quenten Iskov	Project Officer (Hearing Impairment), DECS
Elsa Kyriacou	Social Worker, Kumangka Para District, DECS
Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities	
Christel Butcher	Executive Officer
Fiona Snodgrass	Project Officer

Review of the funding formula and processes

During 2007 when MAC: SWD began determining funding allocations for recipient organisations for the 2008 funding year, the current funding formula (applied since 2000) proved to be not as effective as it had been in the past, particularly as a result of a reduction of overall funds available and increases and shifts in the numbers in service provision in Early Intervention. For 2007 there was an injection of \$393,000 from ODACS which enabled the 2006 level of funding to be sustained.

In 2008, there was no additional funding available. The Funding Approval Group agreed that it was timely to consider scope for the future given the Commonwealth funding quadrennium was due to end after 2008.

Detailed analysis was undertaken over a period of several months by applying various scenarios to potentially new funding formula options. Parallel to the analysis, liaison with Commonwealth Government contacts and other jurisdictions was also undertaken. During this time, the Commonwealth Government also announced that the concept of a funding quadrennium was no longer going to be the instrument for the Commonwealth Government to provide funding to states and territories.

From 2009 the Commonwealth Government's funding guidelines are expected to be less descriptive, with broader scope where states and territories will determine the funding allocations and mechanisms within the National Education Agreement rather than the guidelines as prescribed in the Commonwealth Program for Schools Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2005 – 2008, which has been the instrument used in the past. The review of the funding formula and processes will continue in 2009, taking into account the new arrangements between the Commonwealth and states and territories.

4. Activities in 2008

Committee Leadership and Secretariat Staffing

There were no changes in the Committee's leadership during 2008. Ms Margaret Wallace continued as Chairperson, with Dr Mary Bambacas as Deputy Chairperson.

Ms Lyn Kohl (Executive Secretary) won a temporary higher position in February 2008 and was replaced by Ms Jenny Knight on a temporary basis.

Early Childhood Transition for Children with a Disability

The aim of the project was to identify which transition model and practices support the integrated delivery of early childhood care and education services for children with a disability. The gathered data emphasised the importance of a planned approach to transition and that transition plans for individual children needed to be developed in partnership with parents, care providers and teaching staff. These plans should be recorded clearly and applied consistently across the different education and care settings.

The project's investigations found that no overarching transition policy or guidelines for children with a disability or additional needs in their early childhood years existed for the care and education sectors. Individual centres generally developed transition policy statements as needed, resulting in variation from one centre to the next, with provisions for children with a disability or additional needs also varying.

Project participants and representatives from each of the three education sectors agreed that transition guidelines for children with a disability or additional needs in their early childhood years would provide a framework for improved consistency across care and education settings. They recommended that overarching guidelines be developed regarding transition for children with a disability in consultation with the care and education sectors.

The Minister gave approval for this task to be undertaken in 2009.

Presentations of Research at Conferences

MAC:SWD has had two papers accepted to present at conferences:

- Presentation of a paper on the findings of the 2007 report *Mental Health and Children and Students with a Disability* at the Australian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability (ASSID) Conference in Melbourne, November 2008: 'Principles, Policies and Practices: The Search for Evidence'.
- Presentation of a paper on the findings of the 2008 report *Early Childhood Transitions for Children with a Disability* at the Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) Conference in Melbourne, April 2009: Transitions: Facilitating Change for Students with Special Needs.

In November 2008, at the invitation of the Research in Special Education (RISE) group—a research group at the Centre for the Analysis of Educational Futures at Flinders University—members of the MAC:SWD secretariat gave an overview over past and current research projects at a research information meeting.

Visits to Non-Government Organisations by the Committee

In 2008 Committee members decided to convene two of their regular ten meetings at non-government agencies' sites and provided the agencies with an opportunity to give a detailed presentation about their work to Committee members. The Committee visited Novita Children's Services and the Down Syndrome Society. Both the Committee members and non-government agencies welcomed this initiative and would like this approach to continue in the future, as it engendered lively discussions and a better understanding of the business of the organisations.

5. Future

Projects for 2009

Three projects have been approved by the Minister.

Development of Transition Guidelines across Care and Education Sectors

As a result of research into transition for children with a disability undertaken by MAC:SWD, the Minister approved the development of overarching transition guidelines for children with a disability across the childcare sector and three education sectors (State, Independent and Catholic).

It is proposed that transition guidelines will include:

- a description of the role of parents, consultants and directors/principals and a definition of transition including a glossary of terms;
- general information about placement options for children with a disability and processes for enrolment, including information on where to access up-to-date and specific information;
- guidelines for administrative responsibilities;
- a description of the transition planning processes used by the different sectors and the documents that can assist these processes;
- emphasis on the need for flexibility in transition practices and capacity for negotiation;
- methods for sharing information; and
- guidelines for maintaining confidentiality and respecting privacy.

Ms Margaret Wallace, Chairperson MAC:SWD, will chair the working party. All three education sectors have welcomed the developments of guidelines and have approved the involvement of their representatives on MAC:SWD in this task. The working party will also include representatives of the childcare industry and disability agencies.

Students with a Disability—Physical Education and Health

Research indicates that people with an intellectual disability are three times more likely to be obese than other people and that their health status is substantially lower than that of the general population. MAC:SWD proposes to investigate how students with a disability are provided with choices and included in physical education in South Australian schools. It is further proposed to investigate how non-government organisations support their clients and their families to access physical activities and how they interface with the education sectors in this area. It is proposed that the report will include an overview of available programs for students with a disability.

Students with a Disability and Mental Health Problems—Best Practice

MAC:SWD has been involved with research regarding the mental health of students with a disability since 2006 and published the report entitled *Mental Health and Children and Students with a Disability* in 2007. Since then the Committee has been keeping a watching brief on this topic and has kept in touch with the KidsMatter project, a nationwide preventative whole-of-school approach that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of primary school students. Professor Phillip Slee and his team at Flinders University are currently evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

The Committee approached the researchers about data on the effect of this program on students with a disability. Such data is currently not available, but can be sourced from the existing data with some additional queries. MAC:SWD is proposing to access data for this cohort of students for the 14 South Australian schools involved in the project. The Committee further proposes to work collaboratively with the three education sectors, Disability SA, Autism SA and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to identify where in South Australian schools quality educational practices are happening for students with a disability and mental health problems.

