

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Report for the Minister for Education and Child Development



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

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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 in 1989.

The role and purpose of the committee is to:

- ensure the equitable, transparent and accountable distribution of Commonwealth and State money through State Government funding to eligible organisations that support the care and education of children and students with disability in early years programs, child care, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia
- support the capacity of non-government organisations to provide services to children and students with disability in early years programs, child care, preschools and schools across the three education sectors in South Australia
- undertake projects and provide advice on matters concerning the care and education of children and students with disability as requested by the Minister for Education and Child Development.

Context statement

MAC: SWD is supported by the Office of Non-Government Schools and Services, a unit of the Office for Strategy and Performance in the Department for Education and Child Development.

Our vision

Children and students with 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 State Government funding to eligible organisations providing care and education related services to children and students with disability across the three education sectors, and to support our stakeholders on matters concerning the education and care of children and students with 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.

Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC: SWD) Membership

Standing Committee

Members of MAC: SWD are appointed by the Minister for Education and Child Development. The term of appointment for 2014 was two years. Members are chosen for their knowledge and experience in relation to children and students with disability. The committee consists of educators representing the three education sectors, parents, disability professionals, a student plus nominees of the Minister for Education and Child Development, education unions and professional associations.

As a rule the Standing Committee meets once a month, with the exception of January and April. In 2014 the Standing Committee met nine times. The first meeting was held in February.

Membership

Ms Margaret Wallace, Chairperson

Dr Mary Bambacas, Deputy Chairperson (parent)

Ms Jackie Ah Kit, Minister's Nominee (Aboriginal people)

Ms Gabby Aschberger, Association of Independent Schools of SA

Ms Sue Bailey, Independent Education Union (SA)

Dr Kerry Bissaker, Minister's Nominee (professional)

Ms Vivian Cagliuso, Minister's Nominee (parent)

Ms Elizabeth Cohen, National Disability Services, Sub Committee: Children, Young People and their Families (SA Branch)

Ms Jillian Denys, Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) SA Chapter

Ms Stephanie Grant, Catholic Education SA

Ms Aimee Harwood, Minister's Nominee (student)

Ms Nicole Kyrkou, Department for Education and Child Development, School Years

Ms Deirdre Le Maistre, Australian Education Union (SA Branch)

Ms Deborah McInnes, Department for Education and Child Development, Early Childhood

Ms Rennie Strawbridge, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion

Ms Linda Turpin, Early Childhood Australia (SA Branch)

Funding Approval Group

The Funding Approval Group is a subgroup of MAC: SWD that oversees the annual funding process. Final decisions about funding recommendations are made by the Standing Committee.

Membership

Ms Margaret Wallace, Chairperson

Dr Mary Bambacas, Deputy Chairperson (parent)

Ms Gabby Aschberger, Association of Independent Schools of SA

Ms Stephanie Grant, Catholic Education SA

Ms Nicole Krykou, Department for Education and Child Development, School Years

Dr Kerry Bissaker, Minister's Nominee (professional)

Funding Approval Group non-members:

Ms Jo Shearer, MAC: SWD Executive Officer

Mr Skye Yuill, Project and Policy Officer

Ms Carolyn Parker, Office of Non-Government Schools and Services (ONGSS) Business Manager

Members of the Standing Committee may be asked to attend Funding Approval Group meetings when necessary. Funding Approval Group meetings usually follow the Standing Committee meetings. In 2014 the Funding Approval Group met nine times.

Secretariat staff

Ms Jo Shearer, Executive Officer (until December 2014)

Ms Maria DeFazio, Administrative Services Officer

Mr Skye Yuill, Project and Policy Officer (until Dec 2014), Acting Executive Officer (commenced Dec 2014)

Ms Kerry Pienaar, Project and Policy Officer

2 *Funding*

Overview of funding process

The Minister for Education and Child Development is responsible for the allocation of State Government special education grants to eligible organisations providing education and therapy related services for children and students with disability in South Australia.

Eligible non-government organisations have in the past been able to apply for 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). Funding for this element is now part of specific purpose payments to South Australia under the National Education Agreement between the states and territories and the Australian Government. Grants are allocated under the National Equity program.

The committee administers the allocation of National Equity program grants to non-government organisations on behalf of the Minister for Education and Child Development. In addition, the committee administers State Government grants on behalf of the Minister, which are available to provide additional support for children and students with disability with very specific needs.

Funding allocations

National Equity program grants

Each year, organisations applying for National Equity program grants submit a written report to MAC: SWD outlining child/student numbers and the levels of service provided directly to the child/student and to their care or education provider. The data submitted represent services provided in the preceding financial year, and are verified by education sector representatives who are members of the committee, before being applied to the committee's funding formula. Data for early years intervention services are verified by officers of the MAC: SWD secretariat.

In 2009 MAC: SWD reviewed its funding model in response to a request from the three education sectors, which sought more intense direct service for children and students with high needs at their early years program, preschools and schools. This review was conducted over a period of 18 months in consultation with education sector representatives and non-government organisations providing services.

The new funding model came into effect from 2011. It was agreed that grants should continue to be allocated based on retrospective service delivery and the amount would depend on the level and type of service provided by the organisations. Exceptions are made in two cases – base grants were allocated to two small early years intervention programs in 2014.

The funding model consists of three elements:

- **General support**, which measures the number of children and students who have received any type of service. Thirty per cent of the total available funding is allocated to this component.
- **Specific service**, which measures the amount of time a direct service has been provided to a child or student in minutes. Organisations must achieve a minimum of 120 minutes of early years intervention service per child per semester, or 360 minutes of school support service per student per semester, for their service minutes to be counted. This structure is designed to encourage a high level of intensive, direct support. Sixty per cent of the total available funding is allocated to this component.
- **Outreach service**, which measures the number of children and students who live in rural and regional areas who have received specific service of any duration. Ten per cent of the total available funding is allocated to this component.

Grant allocations to non-government organisations fluctuate on an annual basis. They depend on the finite total budget for the program and the level of service provided to individual children and students by each of the organisations funded.

The funding provided to organisations has been and will continue to be targeted to provide learning and development opportunities for children with disability who are below school age to assist their participation in an early years program and to prepare them for entry into preschools or schools, and to assist school-aged children with disability by improving their participation in educational programs.

The allocation of funds for the National Equity program for the 2014 calendar year was \$4 238 259.

State Government grants

Three programs were eligible for State Government grants in 2014, namely the Women's and Children's Health Network's Access Assistant program, Families SA's Out of Home Care Tutoring 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. The South Australian Government wholly funds the program. In 2014 the program received \$2 796 236.

The Out of Home Care Tutoring program funding provides assistance to children and young people who have been assessed as having disability, are living in out-of-home situations and require extra tutoring to participate in their school curriculum. Assessment for tutoring services must be tied to a negotiated education plan (NEP) or the equivalent in a non-government school. The South Australian Government wholly funds this service. In 2014 the amount of funding allocated was \$76 591.

MAC: SWD manages funding for the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program, which is accessible to 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 requirements on return to school after hospitalisation. An amount of \$45 000 was allocated to support this program in 2014.

Total State Government special education grant allocations

The total amount allocated in 2014 was \$7 138 086. Organisations/programs that received grants in 2014 consisted of:

- 9 non-government organisations offering early years intervention and/or school support programs (see note below)
- Women's and Children's Health Network's Access Assistant program
- Department for Education and Child Development Families SA Out of Home Care Tutoring program
- Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program.

Note: Funding to seven of the nine non-government organisations was allocated retrospectively (as described earlier). The basis of funding for calendar year 2014 was data on services provided from the beginning of Term 3, 2012 (July) to the end of Term 2, 2013 (June). The remaining two non-government organisations that provide Early Years Intervention programs were provided with base grants.

TABLE 1: 2014 Funding allocations

State Government special education grants for 2014			
State Government Grant (for January to December 2014)		\$ (GST ex)	
Women's and Children's Health Network Access Assistant program		\$2 796 236	
Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support (government schools)		\$27 000	
Families SA Out of Home Care Tutoring program		\$76 591	\$2 899 827
National Equity program grants (for January to December 2014)		\$ (GST ex)	
Autism SA	Early Intervention	\$611 853	
	School Support	\$968 838	\$1 580 691
Novita Children's Services	Early Intervention	\$960 961	
	School Support	\$485 848	\$1 446 809
Down Syndrome SA	Early Intervention	\$64 620	
	School Support	\$31 832	\$96 452
Cora Barclay Centre	Early Intervention	\$208 457	
	School Support	\$99 966	\$308 423
Townsend House	Early Intervention	\$132 438	
	School Support	\$64 603	\$197 041
Guide Dogs Association	Early Intervention	\$2 149	
	School Support	\$127 652	\$129 801
Inclusive Directions	Early Intervention	\$363 542	
Miriam High Special Needs Centre, Port Augusta Early Intervention (base grant)		\$70 000	
Early Development program (Seaton) (base grant)		\$27 500	
Joint Sector Intensive & Crisis Support (non-government schools)		\$18 000	\$4 238 259

Number of children and students supported

Data on the number of children and students registered and who received services from July 2013 to June 2014 was collected during 2014. These data were used to inform funding for the upcoming year (2015).

Based on an average over four terms and for all funded non-government organisations, there were 2855 children registered for early years intervention services and 8174 students for school support services. Of these (averaged over the four terms), 3636 children and students received a service, of which 1736 children (48%), received an early years intervention service, and 1900 students (52%) received a school support service. Overall, approximately 4.0% more children and students received a service than in the previous year.

During the same period of time, the Women's and Children's Health Network's Access Assistant program provided services, on average, to 214 children and students with complex health needs. In 2014, 12 children and students were supported through the Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support program for 627 hours in total. Additionally, administrators for the Out of Home Care Tutoring program reported that during 2013 a total of 46 students with disability received services.

Overall, on average, a total of 3908 children and students with disability received additional services to support their early years development and participation in educational and care services from July 2013 to June 2014.

TABLE 2: Average program numbers (based on service provision data provided from Term 3, 2013 - Term 2 2014)

Non-government organisations		
Autism SA Early Years Intervention	377	
Autism SA School Support	934	1 311
Novita Children's Services Early Years Intervention	482	
Novita Children's Services School Support	610	1 092
Down Syndrome Society Early Years Intervention	32	
Down Syndrome Society School Support	71	103
Cora Barclay Centre Early Years Intervention	62	
Cora Barclay Centre School Support	129	191
Townsend House Early Years Intervention	93	
Townsend House School Support	72	165
Guide Dogs Association Early Years Intervention	9	
Guide Dogs Association School Support	84	93
Inclusive Directions Early Years Intervention		649
Early Development Program (Seaton)		7
Miriam High Special Needs Centre (Port Augusta)		25
Sub total		3 636
Other programs		
Women's and Children's Health Network Access Assistant Program		214
Families SA Out of Home Care Tutoring Program		46
Joint Sector Intensive and Crisis Support Program		12
Sub total		272
Total		3 908

3 *Projects*

Each year, the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC: SWD) undertakes a number of statewide projects that have been approved by the Minister for Education and Child Development. These projects may be initiated by the Minister or suggested by the committee.

Projects focus on children and students with disability and their education and care services. Project groups are convened for most projects and members are chosen for their experience and expertise on a particular topic. Three projects were undertaken in 2014. Summaries of these projects are provided below. Once approved by the Minister, reports are made available at the committee's website www.macswd.sa.edu.au.

Support Children and Students with Disability Information Resource

In 2011 the committee began updating the Support for Children and Students with Disability Information Resource to accommodate changes that had occurred across the care, education, health and disability sectors since the resource was first published in 2006. Ongoing work to update this resource during 2014 was approved by the Minister. All sections have since been revised and are now available in electronic format at www.macswd.sa.edu.au with hyperlinks to other websites containing the most current information regarding services for children and students with disability.

The sections are titled:

- Partnerships – roles, rights and responsibilities
- Early years intervention and preschool services
- School services
- Child care services
- Planning for life after school
- External services
- Additional information
- Services and agencies
- Equipment and resources
- Web links.

Staff from a variety of stakeholders provided feedback that the resource is very useful and links to the resource have been created at the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) website. DCSI staff also distributed sections of the resource at the 2014 Adelaide Disability & Lifestyles Expo. National Disability Insurance Agency staff have commented that sections of the resource have been useful for staff who are familiarising themselves with disability services and agencies in South Australia.

Evidence from DECD Online Communication Services has shown that the resource is frequently accessed electronically. DECD Online Communication Services will review the content and design of the MAC: SWD website in the future.

Funding for Disability Services

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC: SWD) allocates funding to government and non-government services to support the development of children and students with disability through early years intervention programs and at childcare centres, preschools and schools.

During 2013, MAC:SWD began enquiries with service providers about their funding sources and service guidelines, in light of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and proposed changes to Australian Government funding to schools (Better Schools Plan).

With the Minister's approval, MAC: SWD continued its inquiry about the impact of changes to funding for children and students with disability and instigated discussions with key stakeholders. The findings were documented in the Funding for Disability Services to Children and Students in South Australia Volume 2 report, which was noted by the Minister for Education and Child Development in December 2014. The Minister gave approval to continue investigating the impact of the NDIS in 2015.

Project group membership 2014

Margaret Wallace, Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities Chairperson

Secretariat staff - Jo Shearer, Executive Officer

- Skye Yuill, Project and Policy Officer

Documenting Effective Building Practices for Children and Students with Disability

In recent years, the South Australian Government has invested in renovating and building new care and education facilities, some specifically for children and students with disability. The intelligence gained from this experience has not yet been coordinated, shared or documented.

This project began in 2014 and aims to record the experiences of people involved in new building developments, to document effective building design that is functional for children and students with disability. Qualitative methods of inquiry have been used. New and refurbished children's centres and schools have been visited and relevant people interviewed. These included mainstream and special schools in metropolitan and regional areas of South Australia. Data has also been collected from architects, facility planners, a landscape consultant and disability service providers.

The project has collected voluminous and rich data about effective building design for children and students with disability. In 2015 the work will continue on the project with the intention to produce a resource that will assist with the planning and design of building developments for children and students with disability in the future.

Project group membership 2014

Margaret Wallace, Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities, Chairperson

Barbara Murray, Educational Consultant, Association of Independent Schools of SA

Stephanie Grant, Senior Education Advisor, Catholic Education Office

Deborah McInnes, Senior Advisor, Early Childhood Support Services, Student, Aboriginal and Family Services, Department for Education and Child Development

Nicole Krykou, Program Manager, Complex Needs and Mental Health Student, Aboriginal and Family Services, Department for Education and Child Development

Peter Walker, Lecturer, School of Education, Flinders University of SA

Peter Skjott, Access Officer, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Guide Dogs Association SA & NT

Kerry Pienaar, Project and Policy Officer, Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

Jo Shearer, Executive Officer, Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities

4 *Additional work*

The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities (MAC:SWD) undertakes additional work on matters concerning the care and education of children and students with disability for the Minister.

The committee provides consultation on policy and legislation advocating for children and students with disability, for example delivering feedback to DECD on the new Children and Student's with Disability Policy.

MAC:SWD secretariat staff represent the committee on reference groups and working parties that are relevant to the committee's work, for example the National Disability Services: NDIS Children's Trial Site Working Party and the National Disability Coordination Officer Program Reference Group. This work provides opportunities to engage with stakeholders, share key information and collaborate.

The committee has been engaged in advocacy on particular issues, for example the place of students with disability in the Australian Curriculum, the engagement of young people with disability and the Disability Justice Plan. The committee also participates in South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) deliberations. As the result of a committee initiative, merit award winners for modified subjects will receive their certificates as part of the SACE Merit Ceremony at Government House from 2016.

The committee works across the three education sectors and this presents opportunities for cross sectorial solutions to emerging issues. In 2014 the committee investigated the provision of a single pool for equipment for children and students with disability to replace the multiple approaches used by the discrete education sectors. The process for development has included consultation with sector representatives and senior officers from the Department for Community and Social Inclusion's (DCSI) Domiciliary Equipment Service (DES). Negotiations continue between sector representatives and DES staff with MAC: SWD having a facilitating role in these negotiations. It is envisaged that equipment provisions for preschools and schools across the sectors will be managed through the Domiciliary Equipment Services process, where procurement, allocation, maintenance and management of stock is well established. The Minister will be informed of the outcome of these negotiations in the future.

The committee continues to distribute the MAC:SWD developed child protection booklet *A Guide to Protecting Children and Young People with Disability and Preventing Sexual Abuse* which is a companion to the *Families SA* booklet, *Protecting Children and Young People with Disability: A booklet for parents and carers*.

5 *Other information*

Committee leadership and secretariat staffing

There were no changes in the committee's leadership during 2014. Ms Margaret Wallace continued as Chairperson, with Dr Mary Bambacas as Deputy Chairperson.

Ms Jo Shearer resigned from the position of Executive Officer (0.8 FTE) in November 2014 and was replaced by Mr Skye Yuill (full-time) in an acting capacity.

Prior to assuming the role of Acting Executive Officer, Mr Skye Yuill continued as Project and Policy Officer (full-time).

Ms Kerry Pienaar continued as Project and Policy Officer (0.5 FTE).

Ms Maria DeFazio continued as Administration Officer (0.6 FTE).

Conferences and presentations

Ms Kerry Pienaar attended the Institute of Access Training Australia seminar on Access and Universal Design in Buildings in Sydney 22 May 2014.

Ms Jo Shearer and Ms Kerry Pienaar attended the Council for Education Facility Planners International (CEFPI) conference at Adelaide Oval 25 - 28 May 2014.

Ms Jo Shearer and Mr Skye Yuill attended the Behaviour in Australian Schools National Summit in Adelaide 15 - 16 July 2014.

Ms Jo Shearer and Mr Skye Yuill attended the Aspect Autism in Education Conference in Sydney 31 July - 1 August 2014.

Ms Jo Shearer presented on the topic of Intellectual Disability and Education to Bachelor of Education and Masters in Education students at Flinders University 18 September 2014.

Ms Jo Shearer, Mr Skye Yuill and Ms Kerry Pienaar attended the Research in Special Education (RISE) Conference in Adelaide 14 November 2014.

6 *Future activities*

Projects for 2015

The Minister approved the following projects to be undertaken in 2015.

- **Funding for Disability Services** (continuing project)
- **Documenting Effective Building Practices for Children and Students with Disability** (continuing project)
- **Same First Day for Children with Disability** (new project for 2015)

In 2014 schools of the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development, Catholic Education SA and some independent schools in the state enacted a new strategy for all children to begin school on the same day once per year.

After one year of implementation, anecdotal information suggests that children with disability may benefit from a gradual transition to school as their skills develop, as not all children are developmentally ready to start school at the time of intake.

This project aims to inquire with families of children with disability and educators about their experience of the Same First Day strategy. It will seek to identify successful models of transition and to report to the Minister for Education and Child Development on the outcomes.



Government of South Australia

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