2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005

Submission template

This document

This document is intended as an optional template for making a written submission to the review.

Submissions can be made in any form, including written, audio or video recorded, and can be uploaded to the review website at:

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Written, audio and video submissions can also be posted in hard copy to

DSE Review
Economic and Social Advisory
Urbis
Level 12, 120 Collins Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000

You are encouraged to review the discussion paper prepared for this review, which can be found on the review website. An audio recorded version of the paper is also available, and other accessible forms of the discussion paper are also available. Please contact the Urbis review team via dsereview@urbis.com.au to access large print and braille versions of the paper.

If you have a question about the review, you can contact the review team at Urbis via dsereview@urbis.com.au
### Your details

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<th>Who is making this submission? Please indicate your name if an individual, or your organisation name if you are responding on behalf of an organisation</th>
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| **Dennis Yarrington, President**  
*Australian Primary Principals Association* |

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<th>Which of the following options best describes you/the organisation making a submission? [Delete those that do not apply]</th>
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Response section

While the 2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education welcomes comments on any aspect of the Standards, discussion questions have been developed to explore a number of key areas.

There are two sets of questions. One set of questions is generally targeted at students and families, the other at providers of education and training. However, you can answer any questions you want and make any other comments in your submission that you want to make.

Questions for providers of education and training

Access and participation

• To what extent (and in what ways) do you think the Standards influence access and participation in education by people with disability?

• To what extent (and in what ways) do the Standards influence access and participation by people from regional, rural or remote Australia, from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, or who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

The standards have raised general awareness of the rights of students with disabilities to attend mainstream schools. Schools and education systems have had to review enrolment policies and practices. This has enabled a more inclusive practice to be encouraged and developed in schools.

Students with disabilities in rural and remote attend the local school, and therefore have been included in the school program.

The disability standards have raised awareness that schools should provide adjustments for any child with a learning need.

The standards have opened the door for students to access programs; however, the adjustments process has created inconsistencies and misinterpretation of the intent of the reasonable adjustment aspects. To make adjustments may mean additional resourcing or modifications that require funding. Funding to implement the standards needs to be provided by governments or education providers. This is a major area of
Knowledge and awareness

- To what extent are people in the education community aware of the barriers faced by people with disability who want to access education?

- To what extent (and in what ways) have the Standards helped to raise awareness among educators and education providers about these barriers?

- Are there particular sectors or settings that are more or less aware of the Standards? If so, why?

- To what extent has awareness improved over the past five years?

Communication of the standards has been inconsistent and left to state and territory jurisdictions to implement. Hence the strategies to overcome barriers are poorly communicated. Primary schools, having students with disabilities, have been implementing the standards due to the high number of students attending. Government schools tend to have the larger number of students with disabilities.

Awareness around the standards has not been actively communicated due to little resourcing to communicate or implement them consistently.

Understanding and advocacy

- To what extent do the Standards make clear the rights of people with disability?

- To what extent do the Standards make clear the obligations of education providers?

- To what extent and in what ways do you think the Standards are used effectively by people with disability to advocate for their rights?

The standards are clear; however, they lack clarity in application and implementation. There are inconsistencies in the interpretation of the measures to meet the standards; lack of resourcing to provide the adjustments necessary; poor professional learning options for teachers and principals; and a dearth of support services for ensuring the quality of the educational program is available. Issues with offsite excursions and options for in-school alternative programs present major challenges.
for principals and teachers. There is goodwill and positive intentions but limitations when additional resourcing is required.

The standards have given people with a disability advocacy support, especially parents of disabled students. However, we see inconsistencies across Australia because the accountability is left to individual state and territory jurisdictions. Principals may, in some circumstances, be forced to redirect limited school resources to ensure the threat of a claim of discrimination is not lodged, based on the premise of how the standard is interpreted.

Non-discrimination in education

- What has been your experience of working with the Standards?
- To what extent and in what ways have the Standards helped education providers to eliminate discrimination and ensure equity of access and participation?
- What has been the most significant impact of the Standards on your part of the education system?
- To what extent have things changed over the past five years?

As a principal of special school, mainstream primary school and preschool to Year 10 school, the standards have been implemented to ensure there was an inclusive approach to all children. Individual learning plans are a strategy that could also be used for students without a disability, but with a special need in learning. The access and participation section ensured teachers were incorporating adjustments to enable students with disabilities to participate but, more importantly, involving the parent in the learning partnership.

However, the level of adjustment, at times, may depend on the level of resourcing available to support the strategy.

Impact: The most significant impact has been on the increase in the number of students enrolling in a mainstream school, the use of the ILP and the differentiation strategies for learning. Physical access adjustments have benefited all students and staff.
The challenge will always be about making adjustments with limited resources. Clearly, not all adjustments can be standardised due to the range in disabilities.

The challenge is often in providing a suitable and meaningful learning program for students, in buildings not designed for access or modification, especially in secondary.

Resourcing of students with disabilities is limited and restricting when you have a range of needs and complexities across a number of year levels.

Support documents need to be developed that help build consistency across state and territories in the interpretation and practical application of the standards.

Communicating the positive achievements of schools in implementing the standards.

Ongoing professional learning for teachers and principals. Primary schools need access to specialist support services to assist with modifying and developing learning programs.

Information and support for parents in understanding the intent of the standards and how to work with their local school.

The growing number of students with mental health or emotional needs is impacting on school resources. Many are also not eligible for additional resourcing.

We need consistency in definition and identification for students with a disability across all state and territories.

We need consistency in transition strategies for students with disabilities.
Final comments include:

*Curriculum and pathway programs for students with disabilities. There is an urgent need for major work in developing a curriculum that is accessible and flexible. This needs to draw on the successful experiences by practising teachers in mainstream schools.*

*We need professional support and programs for new and aspiring principals on developing inclusive school communities.*

*Initial teacher education courses should have mandatory subjects on adjusting learning practices for students with special needs and principles of inclusive practices that incorporate the standards.*

*The Disability Standards are a stand-alone document that need to be supported with resources, which includes financial, human and physical.*

Thank you for making a contribution to the 2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education.