

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**  
**Inquiry into the 2021-22 Budget Estimates**  
**18 June 2021**

**PORTFOLIO: DISABILITY, AGEING AND CARERS**

**Witnesses:**

- Hon Luke Donnellan MP
- Mr Ben Rimmer
- Mr Argiri Alisandratos
- Prof Euan Wallace
- Ms Jodie Geissler
- Mr Greg Stenton

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION 1:**

**1. Have you made representations to the education department or minister to try to get the issue of eligibility criteria for PSD addressed?**

**MR O'BRIEN:** Minister, can I go to budget paper 3, page 170, which talks about support for students with disabilities. Your Victorian Autism Plan speaks of 'strengthening inclusive education for autistic students', but one of the issues that currently affects those students is they must have both a deficit in adaptive behaviour and a significant language deficit to qualify for PSD, so that funding support in schools, meaning many do not qualify. As minister, do you think it is fair that students with autism and deficits in adaptive behaviour do not receive any funding simply because they do not have the language deficit as well?

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Have you made representations to the education department or minister to try to get this issue addressed

**Mr DONNELLAN:** We work with the education department on all these issues in relation to access to schooling and ensuring that when the education department is looking at funding increases for access to school in terms of special development schools and mainstream schools, they work with our disability specialists.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Yes, but it is the criteria for being eligible for PSD that is the issue. Would you be happy to take it today that you will follow that up with the education minister?

**Mr DONNELLAN:** I am happy to come back to you on that one, but that is not \_\_\_\_\_

***BE Hearing Transcript, p.7 and 8***

**Name of Committee member asking questions:** Mr O'Brien

## RESPONSE

### Answer:

I have been advised of the following:

The Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) is a targeted supplementary funding program for Victorian government schools run by the Department of Education. It provides resources directly to Victorian government schools, to support the provision of school-based educational programs for a defined population of eligible students with disability, with high needs.

In order for a school to receive supplementary funding under the PSD, a student must meet the eligibility criteria for one of seven categories outlined in the PSD guidelines. A school's requirement to make 'reasonable adjustments' is not dependent or conditional on the availability of resources under the PSD, and additional resources provided to schools through the PSD do not define or limit the support provided for students with disability.

The Victorian Government has launched Disability Inclusion, a landmark reform to transform support for students with disability in Victorian Government schools. Disability Inclusion will invest nearly \$1.6 billion in additional supports to assist every Victorian Government school to improve education practice and the inclusion of students with disability. Embedded within the Disability Inclusion reform is a dedicated Autism Education Strategy (Strategy) to better meet the education needs and aspirations of autistic students attending Victorian government schools. You can read more about the Strategy at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/Autism-Education-Strategy.aspx>.

From 2021, Disability Inclusion will provide all Victorian Government schools with additional supports, including training, advice, professional learning and resources on inclusive education, while a new approach to funding and support for students with disability and additional needs is progressively introduced over five years. The staged introduction of the new approach will help the school system to manage the change, including recruiting new workforces and transitioning to new processes and practices.

The new approach will strengthen support for students regardless of whether a formal diagnosis has been made by:

- introducing a new way to identify student need, through the new Disability Inclusion Profile. This new process is based on identifying the students' needs and will be used to consider where additional support is required for students with complex and high needs, ensuring they receive the individualised support they require.
- more school-level funding for schools to increase capacity and capability to deliver support, through a new tiered funding model. This new funding will enable schools to provide more support to students with disability.
- focusing on capability development and professional learning in inclusive education, including autism spectrum disorder.

The Profile is a strengths-based process that helps schools and families identify and respond to the needs of students with disability. A workforce of trained facilitators will guide schools and families through the new approach, with a focus on ensuring regional, rural and small schools have equitable access to this workforce.

The design of Disability Inclusion and new processes to support the approach have been informed by the Parliamentary Inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder, including barriers and issues related to diagnosis and access to services, particularly for regional and rural schools.