

I wish to base this submission as a Learning Support Teacher at Emerald State School. The content of this submission will relate directly to Learning Support students, those with disabilities and the Special Provisions accordances. It will relate directly to the NAPLAN test.

ESS is a school of roughly 390 students situated in the mining and farming town of Emerald in Central Queensland. It is the oldest school in town and has, for the most part, a long term staff with little movement each year. In my view, the class teachers are incredibly talented, of very high teaching quality and caliber and extremely caring of their students.

As a result, they spend a great deal of time teaching a quality curriculum, but also preparing their students in the juncture years of 3, 5 and 7 for the NAPLAN tests. We realise as a staff that the results are dependent on the teaching that has come before and is not a result of that teacher having those students for a period of a term and a half before the Tests in May.

For the past 2 years, I have had the responsibility of preparing the Special Considerations for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The students are withdrawn into an extra classroom that we have. It is much quieter and there are more staff there to assist as required. We have students with ASD, Speech Impairments, anxiety and learning delays and difficulties.

This year in particular, I found the distribution of the test quite distressing. Perhaps because of the immense media spotlight, the students came into the room quite anxious and distressed looking. They already know that they are not as good as their academic peers, but are also anxious about what the test will mean for their futures.

I attempted to allay their fears by having a talk about the fact that this test was not a reflection on them in any way. That the NAPLAN testing would not stop them from doing anything they wanted to do in their lives. That the NAPLAN test was measuring the school and that they, the students had been well prepared and for them to do their best.

Whilst some relaxed, others continued to remain anxious over the ensuing 3 days.

The irony for me is that students had been given Special Consideration, but for our children, that meant extra time if needed, a quieter environment and a higher staff to student ratio.

However, it meant that like their peers, we still could not read the whole question to them, or assist with numbers or the language of maths, or assist in any way for these students to demonstrate their knowledge. There is not the option to read any of the reading texts. If a child cannot read, they cannot comprehend, so the tests and ensuing data is not reliable anyway.

The classroom teacher would have far better data and demonstrations of the achievements of these children.

This means that those children could not access the test at any level. If a student in year 7 is reading at a year 3 level, not being able to assist is heartbreaking for both the student and the staff in the room to assist. For students with a speech disability, it was also difficult. Their parents indicated it would be good for them to be in a room where they could get assistance, but I felt a fraud as I knew there was no way within the guidelines that I could actually help those children. Aside from giving them extra time which is not required for them as they fill in the boxes and finish the testing within a 15- 20 minute timeline.

Additionally, for DET to demand an arbitrary increase of 4% in NAPLAN data outcomes is ridiculous. I know there have to be data measurements etc, but why do they not compare the

cohort. Why is the data not measured between the Year 3 cohort of 2008, to the year 5 cohort of 2010. We had the ridiculous expectation at our school of having to have 100% of our indigenous students achieving above national benchmark in 2010, because in 2009 we had one indigenous student sit the test who is an extremely capable student. Of our indigenous students in 2010, 3 have a speech impairment and unfortunately 2 others are reading at below their age expectation. Therefore, for the department to demand 100% as an outcome is laughable.

We are teaching students and human beings. I know outcomes have to be measured, but surely there is a better way than this.

Although our administration placed not pressure on the teachers, they felt it anyway as a result of the massive media interest and statements from the Minister.

I hope this has highlighted some of the issues related to the actual NAPLAN testing.