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**Attention: Senator Brown - Written response to questions on notice**

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to the Senate Inquiry into Autism last month. In response to the additional questions on notice, I have commented below.

*Question: On page 11 of your submission you state 'Our families often report that NDIS planners have a poor understanding of autism.' Do you have any examples of this? What kind of training or other measures could be used to provide trainers with a sufficient level of understanding?*

In preparation for the Senate Inquiry, Autism Awareness Australia conducted a survey of our +100, 000 families who have children with autism and asked them what issues we should present to the inquiry. The two most common issues were the NDIS and schooling. The following are verbatim responses from our community.

"NDIS system that is beyond difficult and inconsistent at delivering solutions to aide autistic children".

"NDIS - this needs to be fixed! Wait times are far too long. Mistakes are made far too often."

"The ndis needs to be more easier for parents to understand so they can get the best outcome for their child."

AAA disagrees with NDIS CEO that autism planners should be 'diagnosis agnostic'. If approx 30% of NDIS participants are on the autism spectrum, then it is fair that 30% of planners have autism specific training and guidelines on how best to advise families to guide them towards appropriate supports.

*Question: On page 6 you say 'Workforce capacity limitations have led to a shortage of placements in evidence-based early intervention services across Australia'. Can you tell us more about this?*

Additional information on the NDIS workforce strategy can be found here:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme/growing-the-ndis-market-and-workforce-strategy>



"There are simply not enough people qualified and NDIS billing approved so the market power is in the services provider. My sons NDIS plan is approved for \$38,000 but there is no provider with less than a 12 month waitlist in our region (hills District Sydney) so I will lose the funding support"

*Question: Turning to page 9 of your submission you state 'No plan to stop the ongoing expulsion and suspension of children with autism in schools'. Do you have any data on this?*

In 2018, more than 600 kindergarten students were suspended from NSW primary schools last year, raising concerns small children are being sent home as punishment for diagnosed and undiagnosed disorders such as autism and / or ADHD.

Figures from the NSW Department of Education show the number of kindy students suspended rose from 398 in 2014 to 435 in 2016, then jumped to 514 in 2017. In 2018, the figure reached 626.

Whilst those figures in NSW are bad, the situation is worse in Queensland, where in 2017, there were 1067 prep kids suspended in Queensland.

Last year, the NSW Department of Education figures showed that seven out of 10 suspensions of kindergarten students in the four years to 2019 involved students who needed some kind of adjustment to accommodate their disability.

Whilst these figures only cover two states, this narrative is repeated around the country. Figures from each state should be requested from each individual Education Department.

Further information can also be gleaned by the Parliamentary submission from Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) where data was collected in their 2019 National Education Survey.

Kind Regards

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