



Students Without a Voice

PSA, NSWTF, NSWNMA and Unions NSW joint statement

NSW children and young people with complex health care support needs are entitled to be able to access public education without compromising their safety or their health.

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) public schools website advises that *"Planning needs to occur to determine the best way for the individual health support needs to be met....This may require the principal to seek additional support from the Department so that appropriate arrangements can be made for the student's participation at school."*

Unfortunately, this planning appears inadequate.

Over time, the complexity of the health care needs of some students enrolled in NSW public schools have evolved, and more students have high level clinical support needs. In our view, the health care procedures School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) are now being asked to undertake demand a level of clinical expertise that cannot be realistically expected of SLSOs.

For example, in a public hospital setting, best clinical practice requires catheterisation to be undertaken by a registered nurse or an enrolled nurse under supervision. This same level of best clinical practice is not being applied in NSW public schools. These students deserve better.

Parents, guardians and care givers may be unaware that SLSOs do not possess healthcare qualifications and are undertaking procedures that potentially may cause serious harm. For the health and welfare of these vulnerable children and young people, this must cease.

SLSOs are employed to assist teachers to deliver educational programs in support of students with physical and psychological health needs.

The NSWTF, Unions NSW and NSWNMA support the PSA's position of SLSOs not performing invasive health care procedures. This is in the best interest of the entire school community and especially so for vulnerable students with disabilities.

The PSA, NSWTF, Unions NSW and NSWNMA demand the DoE supports these students with their healthcare requirements by providing qualified health care professionals. The NSWTF, Unions NSW and NSWNMA adds their voices in support of the PSA to ensure SLSOs are focussed on their core role: supporting teachers to deliver educational programs in the classroom.

The PSA, NSWTF, Unions NSW and NSWNMA believe that students with specific health care requirements enrolled in NSW public schools deserve better.

Yours sincerely,

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