

# Disability Education Reference Group

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Tuesday 1 March 2022

1pm-230pm

Via TEAMS

## Communiqué

In attendance were representatives from the ACT Education Directorate; Community Services Directorate, Office for Disability; ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations; Imagine More, Carers ACT, Down Syndrome ACT, and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority – ACARA. Apologies were received from Advocacy for Inclusion and the Australian Education Union.

Topics discussed included:

- update on consultation activities to inform development of Inclusive Education Strategy, including re-launch of survey this week. The chair thanked members for their input and engagement to date.
- update on interjurisdictional research in Australia and internationally, as well as research relating to the Royal Commission. Participants discussed additional people who could be consulted as part of this research work, including directly with families. Research will eventually be shared with Disability Education Reference Group for discussion.
- update on current systems and operational reform work occurring in schools in inclusion support, disability programs and clinical practice, with challenges discussed including the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing shortages.
- discussion about the importance of language and using terms such as “inclusion” appropriately.
- experiences of children and families discussed and their feedback that they don’t always feel part of school community. Importance of parent involvement in a pandemic discussed.
- while immediate support for schools managing incidents or requiring advice is a focus, medium-term policy and legislative work is also under way including suspensions/exclusions changes.
- discussion about the demands on teachers and potential barriers and help ensure teachers understand the experiences of children with disability and their families. Supports are needed for cultural change, and this will be recognised in the Inclusive Education Strategy.
- Community Services Directorate provided an update on disability conversations occurring throughout 2022 to engage with as many people as possible. All conversations will be led and facilitated by people with disability. Update about NDIS also provided, including current education to families about how they can access the scheme, including at schools.
- members provided brief updates about current work.
- members agreed Down Syndrome ACT would organise for young people to attend future meeting and also meet with Minister. Other future agenda items discussed included demographic modelling work being undertaken by the Education Support Office and operational policy changes in disability and inclusive education.
- Links to be circulated include link to newly launched *Future of Education* implementation plan and current Productivity Commission inquiry.
- Meetings for 2022: Tuesday Week 5 of each term. Next Meeting: Tuesday 24 May