



'Empowering children with Autism and their families through knowledge & support'

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Tuesday 24th March 2009.

Dear Members of Parliament,

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a global epidemic. In Australia more than 1 in 100 children are affected, and if figures from the UK are an indicator, it can affect as many as 1 in 57 children.

Article 28 of the convention on the rights of the child guarantees that every child has the right to an education. Article 29 of same states that every child has the right to an education "...designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values". Education must be "child-centred, child-friendly and empowering".

Unfortunately, this is not occurring with our children who are on the Autism Spectrum. Many of our children are experiencing the following unacceptable outcomes and inequities: *being suspended from school for displaying behaviors which are manifestations of their Autism; being told they can only attend school for one or two hours per day; being placed in inappropriate environments and settings that play havoc with their sensory processing; having to travel unacceptable distances of 1 1/2 hours each way, just to get to school.* We would not allow this for mainstream children within the general population, so why is it a reality for our children on the Autism Spectrum who deserve the same right??

We petition you for the following to be implemented:

- **An Autism specific unit in every public school, including High Schools, regardless of the location.**
- **Teachers and aides employed to work in these units will have training that covers all the nuances that comes with Autism Spectrum Disorder.**
- **That all teachers and teachers' aides, be they special educators or mainstream teachers, attend at least two days compulsory training per year on Autism to learn more about the disorder and different strategies to assist children and their families.**
- **That all children on the Autism Spectrum automatically qualify for entry to the unit and that an Intellectual Disability is not an entry prerequisite.**
- **The units are to include a bathroom, sensory room, quiet room and a secure, fully fenced play area.**
- **Full time teacher's aides for children in a main stream setting.**
- **School security and safety is adequately upgraded at all schools to ensure no harm comes to children on the autism spectrum.**
- **Immediate action to be taken to care for those of our children on the Autism Spectrum who are currently being refused entry to both special schools and mainstream schools.**

All children should have access to services and resources close to home to give them the best possible start in life. Most children affected with Autism Spectrum Disorders are intelligent and many are high functioning. They need specialised assistance to unleash their potential, to teach them the skills they need to lead a "normal" life and to become the leaders and tax payers of tomorrow.

We look forward to your reply regarding this matter.

Kind regards,

Name:

Address:

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