



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Our Ref MC09-007648

Ms Penny Clarke
4 Cowrang Avenue
TERREY HILLS NSW 2084

Dear Ms Clarke

Thank you for your letter of 17 March 2009 to the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, concerning your son Daniel, who has a disability. The Minister has asked me to reply on her behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Minister is concerned about the education of children with disability, and the related challenges faced by their families and schools. She appreciates how important it is for these children and their families to receive appropriate support in meeting their needs.

The Australian Government strongly supports the rights of students with disability to have the same educational opportunities as other children and is committed to providing ongoing funding for this purpose. As state and territory governments have primary responsibility for the delivery of school education, government and non-government education authorities in each jurisdiction administer this funding and make the final decisions about additional support for individual students.

Given this, if you have not already done so, you may wish to raise your concerns about the support available to Daniel with the Association of Independent Schools (NSW). The relevant contact is:

Ms Robyn Yates
Director, Special Education,
Association of Independent Schools (NSW)
Level 4, 99 York Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
(02) 9299 2845
ryates@aisnsw.edu.au

Please be assured that the Government is committed to working collaboratively with states and territories to improve educational outcomes for all students, including those with disability, in all educational settings. To this end, the Government recently signed a \$42.4 billion National Education Agreement with states and territories for school education over 2009-12.

In addition to this, the Government is providing significant funding for schools through National Partnerships with states and territories, including Improving Teacher Quality (\$550 million), Literacy and Numeracy (\$540 million) and Low SES School Communities (\$1.1 billion). This investment aims to generate better outcomes for all students, including those with special needs.

You may also be interested to know that as part of the Government's \$42 billion Nation Building - Economic Stimulus Plan, \$14.7 billion is being invested over three years for the BER program to fund infrastructure projects at primary and secondary schools. This new funding will provide \$12.4 billion for *Primary Schools for the 21st Century*, \$1 billion for *Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools* and \$1.3 billion for a *National School Pride* program.

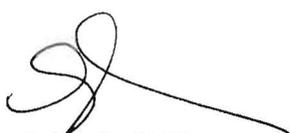
Under the *National School Pride* element of the BER, all schools are eligible to apply to state and territory education authorities and the Block Grant Authorities for funding through the BER for small scale infrastructure building and refurbishment funding of up to \$200 000, subject to the size of the school. These projects can include specialised infrastructure support for students with disability or special needs.

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring students with disability benefit from its substantial investment in all Australian schools and have the same opportunity to participate in an inclusive education environment.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is finalising a Fact Sheet on access and use by people with a disability of BER constructed or refurbished infrastructure and amenities. The Fact Sheet will address the draft Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards currently being considered by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Once finalised the Department will provide a copy of the Fact Sheet to each of the 22 education authorities. It will also be available on the BER website at www.buildingtheeducationrevolution.gov.au.

I trust this information is of assistance and wish Daniel well with his education.

Yours sincerely



Gabrielle Phillips
Branch Manager
Student Access and Equity Branch

3 May 2009