

Disabled boy's education funding slashed

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A disabled Sydney boy's education funding has been slashed despite his family's goodwill in trying to save the NSW government \$1 million in renovation works at a local school.

When it came time for wheelchair-bound Daniel Clarke to attend secondary school, Davidson High, in Sydney's northern suburbs, would have needed extensive renovations to cater for his special needs.

The works were estimated to cost some \$1 million.

The Clarke family decided instead that Daniel, now aged 13, would attend Northern Beaches Christian School, which was already equipped to cater for the cerebral palsy-sufferer's needs in getting about.

However, the move to a non-government school resulted in Daniel losing 80 per cent of the funding support for his teacher's aide, forcing his family to find \$25,000 a year to cover the cost of the position.

"They've basically said that there is no funding available and they are not prepared to help," Daniel's father Rodney Clarke told reporters on Thursday of the government's approach to his family's situation.

"They are certainly not considerate of our situation."

Mr Clarke says the family has approached Premier Kristina Keneally, whom they met during her time as disability services minister, but she referred them to Education Minister Verity Firth.

"Daniel said it best when he met with Verity Firth's office, when he said, 'Why have you taken away my funding when my cerebral palsy hasn't gone away?'" Mr Clarke said.

Asked about Daniel's education funding during question time in parliament on Thursday, Disability Services Minister Paul Lynch said the amount of money being paid was correct for a student at a non-government school.

"(The) NSW government funds children in non-government schools based on a calculation of 25 per cent of equivalent average government school costs," Mr Lynch said.

"This means the NSW government funding for non-government schools is consistently in proportion to spending on government school students."

The minister acknowledged Daniel's presence at parliament, referring to him as "a remarkable young man", later suggesting questions on the matter be directed to Ms Firth.

Mr Clarke said the current funding arrangement was only sustainable thanks to help from Daniel's school and the community.

However, the family is considering shifting Daniel to Davidson High, which will force the costly public works.

Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell said a coalition model would see funding that best suits the individual needs of those with a disability, not what best suits bureaucrats.

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