



**QUEENSLAND
COLLECTIVE**
FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

#Inclusion NOW Rally

Brisbane, 26th Oct 2022

BRIEFING PAPER

QUEENSLAND COLLECTIVE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA
qldcollectiveie@gmail.com

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Who We Are

The Queensland Collective for Inclusive Education is a volunteer group of parents and carers who are dedicated to advocating for true inclusion in education for our children with disability. We have members throughout Queensland, Australia.

Our Vision

Our vision for the future of education in Queensland is for one high quality State education system that successfully caters to ALL students in one inclusive setting.

Our vision is one of transformation and reimagining - where the currently divided QLD education resources (between mainstream and Special schools) are finally combined, and used to create an innovative learning environment that allows for the implementation of true inclusion, for the benefit of ALL students.

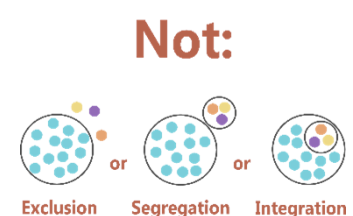
We want ALL Queensland students to have easy access to their local neighbourhood schools, where every child's learning and support needs are expertly recognised and accommodated. We want ALL students to feel belonging and to be supported to participate in all aspects of school life.

Our vision is one of a fully funded, quality education system that supports our teachers to have the time and the expertise to be able to plan for and teach every single student that enters their classroom. We want teachers to have the support they need to feel confident to include any student in quality learning and participation within their classroom, without exception.

We want Queensland to be the State that lives up to its promise of inclusion, and rejects segregation and exclusion, of those with disability. We want the gap between the promise of the Inclusive Education Policy, and what families are currently experiencing at their local schools, to close. We need the Qld Government to commit to seeing its own Policy implemented with fidelity and speed.

The Current Situation

In Queensland we have a multi-track state education system, consisting of mainstream schools, special schools and home education. Students with disability are often steered toward special schools or home education, either directly or indirectly. If the local school down the road is not prepared or equipped to provide for or support a child, then the alternative "choice" is to go to the special school or do home education. This "choice" is often touted as being the best solution for all students, allowing all students to access the support they need to reach their full potential. However, this assertion is not supported by evidence, and in fact the evidence says all students learn better together, if they are supported well to do so.



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The Hope - 2018

In 2018 Queensland was proudly the first Australian State to announce a dedicated [inclusive education policy](#). It was world leading, [award winning](#), and aligned with the UN's Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities' Article 24 [General Comment no. 4](#) 'The right to an inclusive education'. Subsequently, many Queensland families headed off to their local, regular school with new hope and confidence. Their child with disability would be welcomed and included in regular classes, learning age- appropriate curriculum, alongside their non-disabled peers, as was stated in the policy!

These families started to dare to envision an included future for their child with disability. Their child could finally attend their local school with their siblings and neighbourhood friends. They found comfort in the hope that their child would be well known and valued by those in their local community.

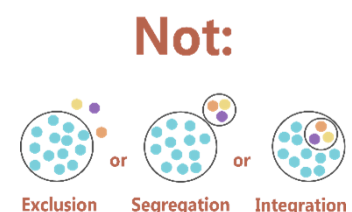
These parents were not naïve. They knew there would be bumps in the road as school staff and local communities learnt how to include and best support their child. What they did expect was to see a commitment to change and to finding inclusive solutions. These parents were ready to learn and work in partnership with school staff and their local communities, as together they brought the policy to life.

The Reality -2022

Four years later in 2022, many of these families have fallen exhausted and heartbroken. Many with broken children and broken dreams. Many now home-school or have returned to special school. Their child's future now looks very uncertain. They know they will have to go to extreme efforts to ensure they find ways to keep their child connected to the everyday world and to their local community.

For most of these families their efforts to see their child included at their local school were not met with open arms and minds. Instead, most were met by significant resistance to change, or some by educators who wanted to include their child but just didn't have the training, support or resources necessary to do so. Many families still currently experience state schools unwilling to enrol their children, schools that 'manage' their children out through reduced hours, suspensions or cancellations of enrolment. There is still a common occurrence of micro-exclusions, where students are not supported to access school activities on the same basis as their peers, such as camps, sports days, swimming carnivals, and extra-curricular activities offered at or after school.

Parents who question why the policy isn't being followed are frequently met with the response, "inclusive education is a journey" or "we all have a different idea of what inclusion looks like". When parents ask, "when will my child move out of SEP classes and into the regular classes?", "when will my child's hours a day at school be increased?", "when will adequate supports be provided?", they are met with blank looks and shrugs of shoulders. The celebrated Inclusive Education policy simply hasn't been given the support, leadership or follow through that it required. There is no concrete 'destination' that this 'journey' is working towards.



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Running parallel to this devastating experience for families in mainstream schools, is the constant huge investment by the Queensland government in segregated special schools. The latest Qld government budget spent [\\$108.9M on only 6](#) of the 90 special schools around the State. Actions speak louder than words, and money speaks the loudest. It is therefore obvious to us that the Queensland government is not currently committed to upholding and progressing their own Inclusive Education Policy, preferring instead to invest in segregation in Qld. This is a source of great frustration and sadness to those whose vision is for one of inclusion for those living with disability.

For further details please read the open letter to the Education Minister here: – [Have some heart Grace Grace](#)

SOLUTIONS

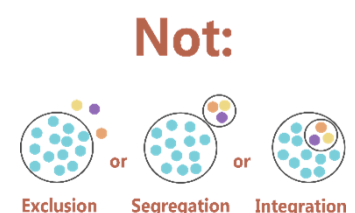
The Queensland Collective for Inclusive Education and our supporters urgently demand that the Queensland Government and the Education Minister, Hon Grace Grace MP, fully commit to and invest in the needed **transformation** of our education system to achieve the genuine and successful inclusion of ALL students, in one educational setting, without exception.

We believe ALL Queensland students deserve a high-quality INCLUSIVE education system, consistent with the UNCRPD – **not** the current discriminatory, exclusionary, stigmatising, and economically wasteful multi track system we have now.

We want schools to be a place where everyone learns to value and respect diversity, where teachers are supported to be expert teachers of ALL, where excellence in education is delivered to ALL, and where student, teacher and community well-being are the highest priority.

Our kids with disability have a human right to an inclusive education – but the current wasteful spending, mis-interpreted policies, and mis-guided practices are not delivering this basic right to Queensland kids. Four years on from the introduction of the Queensland Inclusive Education policy, the so-called “journey” to inclusive schools is unbearably slow, shockingly incoherent, has no destination, comes without real resourcing, and is miserably failing far too many.

We say **Inclusion NOW!**



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Our rally has **four** demands.

We call on the government to:

- ❖ **Fully invest in the **transformation** to an inclusive education system.**
 - Reallocate all government spending on education towards inclusive practices - more teachers, more training and PD, more teacher planning time, and more support staff for all students, offered in one inclusive setting.
 - Cease funding new segregated infrastructure immediately – no more new special schools or special buildings
 - Undertake change management to support the transition of all students into a new and transformed education system by 2030, which includes the necessary and vital cultural change to make true inclusion a reality.

- ❖ **Follow the Inclusive Education **policy** by upholding the human right to an inclusive education**
 - Establish an independent complaints body, including a parent hotline, and strengthened investigative powers to drive accountability and compliance with the IE policy and laws by school leaders.
 - Establish state-wide and regional stakeholder groups which give voice to students and their families, to promote stronger school-community partnerships and a shared vision of an INCLUSIVE education system leading to INCLUSIVE communities.
 - Review the Education Act to restrict the power of the school Principal around decisions which could discriminate or breach a student’s human rights (eg. exclusions).

- ❖ **Follow the **evidence** – 60 years of research in favour of inclusive education**
 - Require all DoE staff (especially school leaders, Guidance Officers and regional staff) to understand-the weight of evidence in favour of inclusive education
 - Make quality training in inclusive education mandatory for all staff and information prominently available internally, in parent education materials and provided to school P&Cs.
 - Ensure urgent progress towards evidence based inclusive approaches are embedded within continuous school improvement processes.

- ❖ **Follow the **Law** – adopt a positive duty with regard to compliance with the QHRA, DDA and QADA**
 - Prevent discrimination before it happens by ensuring all staff understand that every student must have access to reasonable adjustments and other legal entitlements.
 - Rescind the discriminatory Special School enrolment policy which cements students with intellectual disability as less deserving of inclusion.
 - Provide enhanced advocacy services across Queensland so that all students and families can better understand and protect their child’s legal entitlements.

