



MEDIA RELEASE

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Hanson comments miss the point on inclusive education

People with disabilities and the parents of children with disabilities are calling for a renewed focus on inclusive education in Western Australia and a national strategy to support inclusive education. This follows calls by One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson for students with disabilities to be withdrawn from mainstream classrooms.

Developmental Disability WA CEO, Taryn Harvey, said Senator Hanson's comments are inconsistent with established evidence and reinforced stigma and discrimination of people with disabilities.

"Senator Hanson's comments are ill-informed and damaging. They blame the person with a disability for the failures of our service systems to meet universal service obligations", Ms Harvey said.

Senator Hanson made the claims in a Parliamentary speech on the Turnbull Government's proposed education funding reforms, drawing nationwide condemnation, including from education experts.

"There is consistent evidence that successful inclusive education maximises learning and development for all students. Unfortunately parents and teachers often struggle to get the help they need to make inclusion successful."

DDWA is the state's oldest and largest independent consumer advocacy organization for people with developmental disabilities, including autism. It supports parents to negotiate with schools in all education settings. DDWA also works with schools to build their capacity to support students with disabilities.

"Parents want to be able to make genuine choices about which school best meets their child's needs. Our members and many schools consistently tell us the education system makes it really difficult to make inclusion a genuine choice.

That's driving an increasing trend towards homeschooling because parents feel they have no other option. It's also contributing to the use of restrictive practices in schools to manage behavior, which can be traumatic for children," said Ms Harvey.

"There is a consistent message from educators that the momentum in support of inclusive education within WA's education system has been on the wane for the last ten to 15 years. It's time to renew that focus with a clear policy and a proactive strategy that increases the capacity of educators and schools to support kids with disabilities, and that supports parents and students as equal partners in education."

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