



Education &  
Communities

Public Schools NSW

# Every Student, Every School

Learning and Support



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# Introduction

The achievement of successful educational outcomes for every student, from Kindergarten to Year 12 and in preparation for adult life, is supported through high quality teaching and learning.

**S**ome students need additional support to access the full range of education opportunities and to achieve success.

These additional learning and support needs may relate to a range of circumstances for the student, their family and their schools. They may be short term or ongoing throughout schooling. They may relate to disability or difficulties in learning or behaviour from a variety of causes.

Over time, a wide range of specialist services and programs have been put in place to provide additional support for students with disability and special needs in public schools.

These include:

- specialist services and programs targeted for individual students; and
- programs that provide specialist resources to schools to support students experiencing difficulties in learning.

These programs and services play an important part in the full range of services provided for all students in public schools.

Concentrating our efforts in highly specialised approaches for certain students, or for certain aspects of their learning and support in isolation, is no longer adequate.

Teachers are increasingly challenged by the diverse learning needs of students in their classrooms and the complexity of the services and programs that provide additional support.

Parents want high quality educational services for their children with additional learning and support needs, wherever they live in New South Wales.

Classroom teachers, schools and support staff must be better equipped to understand the differences in learning needs that students have. They must also be better equipped to have the capacity to support those needs.

We must find better ways of ensuring that we meet the additional learning and support needs of every student in every school.

Over the next two years, additional resources will be provided through the Australian Government's National Partnership initiative, More Support for Students with Disabilities. This initiative provides an important opportunity for public schools in New South Wales to build their capabilities to meet the additional learning and support needs of students with disability.

Catholic and Independent schools throughout New South Wales will also benefit from this National Partnership through their own agreements with the Australian Government.

This document sets out the challenges in New South Wales public schools that we are seeking to address and what we will do to meet those challenges through our National Partnership Agreement in 2012 and 2013.

We must find better ways of ensuring that we meet the additional learning and support needs of every student in every school.

# The need for change

Children and young people with additional learning and support needs are enrolled in every New South Wales public school. They are being taught in every classroom. Parents want high quality educational services for their children, wherever they enrol.

## Students with additional learning and support needs in our schools

The NSW public school system is large and complex. In 2012 there are more than 740,000 students enrolled in more than 2,200 primary, secondary, central and special schools. More than 50,000 classrooms operate across the state each day.

Around 90,000 students, or 12% of our total school population, have a disability and/or additional needs relating to difficulties in learning or behaviour.

### Of these 90,000 students:

- around 35,000 (4.7% of all students) have a confirmed disability against the Department's criteria for its targeted specialist services: intellectual, physical, hearing, vision, mental health and autism.
- a further 55,000 (7.3% of all students) have additional needs relating to disability or difficulties in learning or behaviour, including dyslexia, reading and/or communication delay and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## The changing profile of students

The number of students in our schools with disability or additional learning and support needs has increased considerably in recent years.

In particular, there has been a sharp increase in the number of students with autism spectrum disorders and students with mental health disorders.

The reasons for this growth are complex. However, the experience in our schools is consistent with that of other education jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

## The changing nature of service delivery

Students with additional learning and support needs are enrolled in every school and are being taught in every classroom.

The current specialist service system providing additional support in our schools has been built over many decades. This service model recognises the type of disability that a student has rather than the additional educational needs of each student.

A 'one size fits all' approach is problematic. This is because many students with similar types of disability have different individual needs for support. For example, students with autism have widely varying needs in relation to communication, social interaction and behaviour due to the nature of this complex disorder.

For each student, these needs may change over time.

Schools and teachers are increasingly challenged by students who may present with additional learning and support needs but who do not meet the existing disability criteria for targeted services.

Further, teachers, students and parents are increasingly challenged by different specialist services providing separate elements of support, especially where they are not well integrated to support students.

Lack of access to services in remote and rural areas of NSW is also reported by parents and schools to be a major challenge in providing additional support for students.

## Obligations and expectations around disability

Under the Commonwealth *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, all education providers are required to make sure that every student with disability is able to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

This includes a requirement to make or provide adjustments for the student where needed so that they have the same experience and opportunities as their peers without disability.

**Fig 1.0 Historical trend in enrolments and funding for students with confirmed disability in NSW public schools**



Annual enrolment of students with confirmed disability – showing percentage of total enrolments

Students, or their parents, must be consulted about the adjustments that are put in place for the student.

The introduction of the Disability Standards for Education in 2005 has contributed to changed expectations about access and participation in education for all students with disability. It has also changed expectations about how students with disability are supported to access learning experiences that their non-disabled peers take for granted.

The Australian Government's reforms in the area of support for people with disability reflect these changed expectations.

There is significant national work underway in both the areas of education and in disability care and support. These areas intersect and the outcomes of this work will present significant opportunities and challenges into the future.

In education, there is a growing focus on accountability for educational outcomes. There is an increasing emphasis on every student acquiring a common set of core skills to equip them for further learning and adult life.

The development of an Australian curriculum and expectations that almost every student will participate in national and state-wide testing at regular stages of their schooling to assess their performance sharpens attention on the educational outcomes for every child, including those with disability and additional learning and support needs.

Across the community there is also a growing emphasis on a 'person-centred' approach to the way that services are provided to support the needs and aspirations of people with disability and their families.

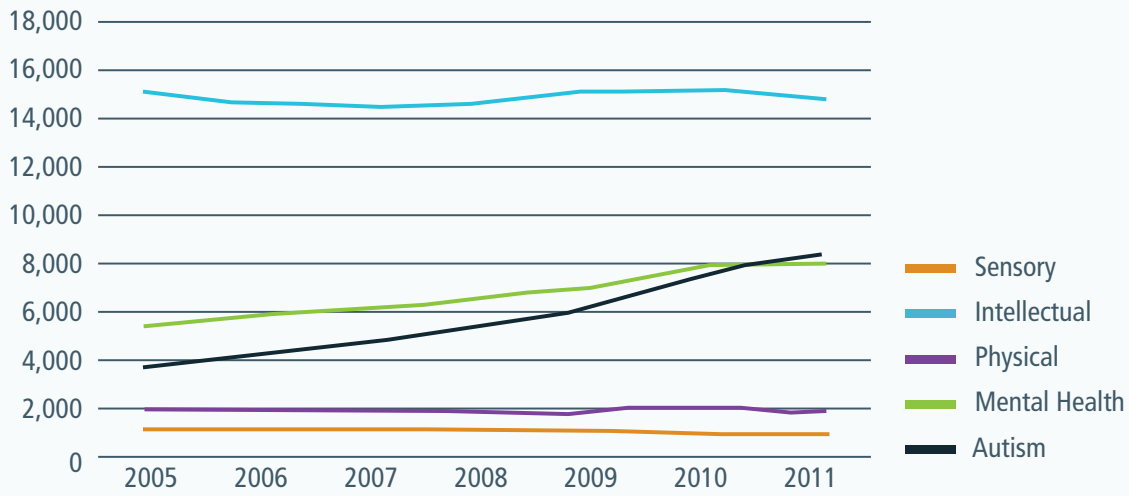
These directions are expressed in the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. This strategy sets out a ten year national plan for improving life for Australians

with disability, their families and carers. The purpose of the strategy is to guide government activity across mainstream and disability-specific areas of public policy to achieve greater inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of life.

Education is a key area of focus for the National Disability Strategy, together with other important areas such as health and wellbeing, personal and community support, rights protection, economic security and accessible communities.

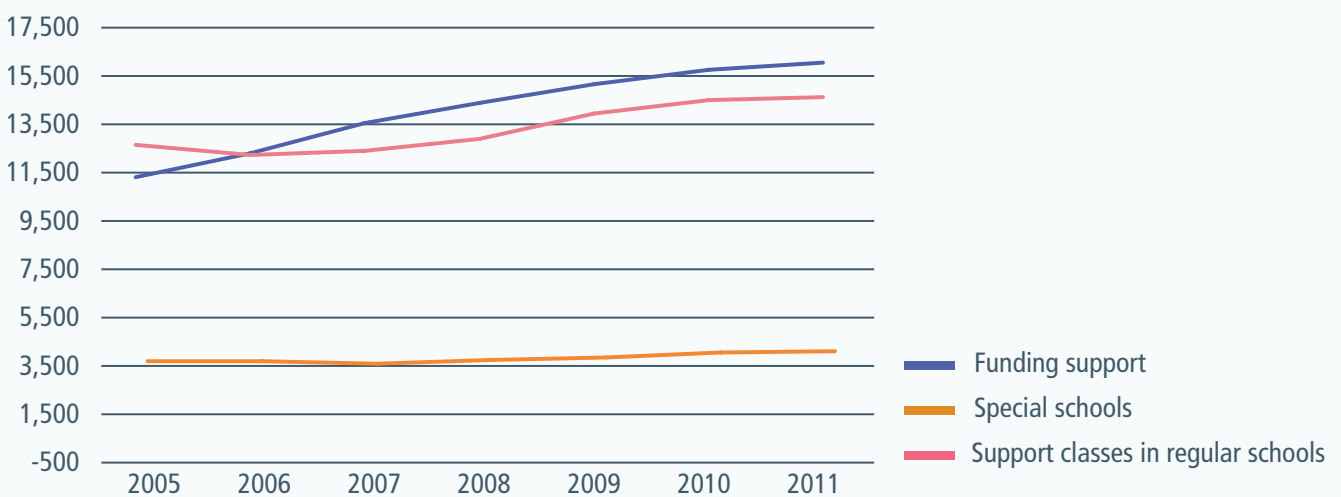
New South Wales is committed to implementing the National Disability Strategy across all areas of state government responsibility, including education. The need to find better ways of ensuring that we meet the additional learning and support needs of every student with disability is consistent with directions under this strategy.

Fig 2.0 Changing student profile



Students with confirmed disability in NSW government schools by disability type, 2005-2011

Fig 3.0 Trends in educational placements for students with confirmed disability



Educational settings for students with confirmed disability in NSW government schools, 2005 - 2011

Fig 4.0 Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005

# Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005

## The Standards cover

- enrolment, parent choice
- access and participation
- curriculum development, accreditation & delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment and victimisation

The Standards require schools to treat students with disabilities **on the same basis** as students without disability.

The Standards include obligations for making **reasonable adjustments** to the student's learning program and /or learning environment.

Parents, and where appropriate, students with disability **must be consulted** on the personal adjustments that will be provided.

For more information about the Disability Standards for Education, see:  
[www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx)



# A framework for learning and support

We need to find better ways to meet the additional learning and support needs of every student. Establishing a strong framework for learning and support in every school will provide an important foundation for the delivery of educational services into the future.



Five key elements provide the foundations for improved learning and support for every student with additional needs. These five elements, shown in this diagram, provide a framework for achieving high quality learning and support for every student with additional needs and the teachers and support staff who work with them.



# Establishing a framework for learning and support in every school

We take great pride in the high levels of expertise and the many dedicated teachers and support staff in the public school system who work hard to achieve successful outcomes for all students, including those with additional learning and support needs.

Further, many of our specialist schools and settings have developed deep knowledge and understanding of students with additional learning and support needs.

However, this expertise is not readily available in every school.

Over recent years, the Department has initiated a range of activities to improve the support that we provide for students with additional learning and support needs.

We have increased options for specialist professional learning for teachers and other education personnel to extend their knowledge and skills in working with students with additional learning and support needs.

Important work has been undertaken on the development of a new 'functional assessment' tool for teachers to profile the strengths, abilities and needs of students with a disability to inform planning to support the learning needs of these students.

We have more than 18 months of experience implementing a new approach to supporting students with additional learning and support needs in more than 220 mainstream schools.

We need to build on the experience and learning that has been gained through these activities and on the high levels of expertise available in our system.

To do this, we need to develop and implement strategies that complement each other to provide a strongly integrated framework for learning and support in every school.

Over the next two years, through the National Partnership Agreement: *More Support for Students with Disabilities*, we will focus on five areas of activity that will enable the establishment of strong and robust learning and support in all NSW public schools.

These five areas of interrelated activity, set out in more detail in the following pages, are:

- Professional learning for skilled and knowledgeable teachers
- Support for students with disability in regular classrooms
- Special schools as centres of expertise
- Instruments and materials to better understand and meet additional learning and support needs
- Information to support teaching and learning and expert support

None of these areas of activity stands alone.

Together, they provide an integrated approach to building the capabilities of all of our schools to provide high quality support for students with disability and additional learning and support needs now and into the future.

# “We need to build on experience and the high levels of expertise available in our system.”

The five key areas of project activity shown enable a framework for learning and support for students, parents and teachers, to be established in every school. More detail about each of these areas of activity and what we will do during 2012 and 2013 to strengthen learning and support for every student in every school are set out on the following pages.



# Professional learning for skilled and knowledgeable teachers

Research demonstrates that one of the most significant contributors to educational outcomes in the school environment is the teacher.

Effective teachers are our most important resource for supporting high quality educational outcomes for every student, including those with disability.

Quality professional learning for teachers and support staff is vital for ensuring that schools are able to meet the needs of their students with disability. It must extend the knowledge and skills of teachers to plan and make adjustments for students in collaboration with students and their parents.

## What we will build on

- An extensive range of training, resources and professional learning accredited by NSW Institute of Teachers that support our teachers and school leaders. This includes courses that address education support for students with disability or additional learning needs.
- A highly successful range of specialist courses for teachers and other education personnel that are delivered through a blended training mode of workshops and tutor-supported online learning.
- Current retraining programs in special education offered for experienced teachers and delivered through local universities.

## What we will do now

We will develop and implement an increased range of opportunities for teachers and educational support staff to access quality professional learning and training that supports:

- high expectations for every student,
- teachers in making adjustments to support the individual learning needs of students with disability, and
- effective collaborative partnerships with parents and other professionals.

This professional learning will be delivered in a range of ways to meet the needs of educational personnel across the state, including face to face training, video conferencing and supported online training.

### We will:

- Provide more than 300 additional scholarships for teachers to undertake retraining to gain post graduate qualifications in special education.
- Provide access for more teachers and other support staff to accredited online learning courses in areas of additional learning and support need including: autism; behaviour; dyslexia and significant reading difficulties; speech, language and communication, and; motor coordination.

- Develop and implement additional accredited professional learning to support teachers. This will include the priority areas of:
  - understanding the Disability Standards for Education
  - making adjustments for students with additional learning and support needs.
  - understanding and responding to the needs of students with hearing impairment.
  - support for learners with additional needs in the middle years of schooling
- Provide support for staff to undertake further training in the mental health needs of our students in rural and remote areas.
- Provide support for schools' understanding and use of Positive Behaviour for Learning through conferences and regional workshops.

### This will result in:

A teacher workforce that is better equipped to understand and meet the learning and support needs of the full range of students in their classrooms.

# Support for students with disability in regular classrooms

Our school system provides an extensive range of specialist teaching services. However, these are not currently available in every public school. In many cases, regular class teachers wait for the support they need in teaching the students in their class.

Parents, teachers and principals have told us that they want more specialist support in regular, mainstream schools.

We need to improve access to timely specialist support for more students with disability and additional learning and support needs.

## What we will build on

- An extensive range of specialist teaching services provided through a range of programs.
- The experience gained through a trial of a new model of supporting students with additional learning and support needs in more than 220 schools.

## What we will do now

We will establish a specialist teacher presence in every mainstream school to support students with additional learning and support needs and their classroom teachers.

To achieve this, we will re-organise some of our existing specialist support services. This reorganisation will allocate directly to schools more than 1,800 existing specialist teachers. These allocations will be adjusted every three years. In addition funding in excess of \$39 million will be adjusted annually to reflect change in school needs.

Principals, through their school learning and support teams, will remain responsible for determining how the school's resources are used to best meet the learning and support needs of students in their school. This will enable more students to access support without the need for formal applications and paperwork outside the school.

Schools will have the flexibility to work together to share or pool their resources to provide specific programs or activities to support learning outcomes for students in their schools.

Students with a confirmed disability who have moderate, complex or highly specialised targeted support in mainstream schools will continue to be supported by existing arrangements.

Our special classes in regular schools and special schools will also continue to operate under existing arrangements.

## We will:

- Provide support in 2012 and 2013 for schools and regions to implement learning and support in every mainstream school.
- Provide an extensive program of induction training and ongoing professional learning to support school leaders, specialist teachers, classroom teachers and support staff.

This training will include a focus on supporting:

- A deep understanding of the learning and support framework and accountability for meeting the needs of every student with disability in consultation with students and their parents.
- Effective local decision making about the use of resources provided to the school to support students with additional learning and support needs and their teachers.
- Collaborative use of resources between schools and across communities of schools to achieve learning outcomes for students.

## This will result in:

- Classroom teachers across the state having more immediate access to additional support within the school to meet the educational needs of students with disability, including those in rural and remote locations.
- Students with disability and additional learning and support needs having access to well supported classroom teachers and specialist in-school assistance at the time that they need it.

# Special schools as centres of expertise

Our specialist schools and settings have developed deep knowledge and understanding of learners with additional learning and support needs. Expertise in specific areas of learning and support for students with disability are often intensive and focused in these specialist settings.

We need to strengthen opportunities for schools with specialist expertise to collaborate, develop and share their knowledge more widely across the school system and between special and mainstream schools.

## What we will build on

- 106 special schools and their teaching and support staff who provide educational services to students in specialist settings.
- the knowledge, expertise and specialist resources available in our special schools supporting students with intellectual disability, mental health and behaviour needs, and students in hospital.

## What we will do now

We will develop networks across schools to share the knowledge, expertise and specialist resources available or developed in NSW public special schools.

We will do this by funding our special schools to undertake locally designed projects in the following areas of priority need:

- Assistive or augmentative technology and software as a vehicle for students to access the curriculum
- Case management of students with high and complex support needs in health and/or behaviour (including mental health) and collaborative interagency practice to support students and their teachers.
- The provision of support and adjustments to learning programs to allow students whose communication delay or disability prevents them from accessing regular curriculum outcomes.
- Supporting transition needs of students with disabilities, including preparation, transfer, induction and consolidation of student's access and engagement in education.
- Building learning and support plans through collaborative parent and community partnerships.

Each local project will incorporate a networking strategy integral to its implementation to build and share knowledge and expertise across schools. Networking strategies will be integrated across schools within their region.

Peer support groups comprising principals from intellectual disability, mental health/behaviour and hospital school settings, together with academic contributors, will support the development of high quality projects and outcomes.

## This will result in:

- Effective practice in supporting successful outcomes for students with disability being identified and shared across our system.
- More schools being informed by the expertise and resources developed in specialist settings.
- More students benefitting from teachers' access to expertise available in our specialist schools.

# Understanding and assessing the learning and support needs of students

Currently, we assess students by the type of disability that they have, rather than their additional educational needs.

Parents, teachers and principals tell us that they want better ways to assess and understand the specific educational needs of students that recognises more than the type of disability of the student.

Understanding the specific educational needs of individual students is a vital element in identifying and planning the support and adjustments that they need. Teachers, students and parents are in the best position to inform this understanding by working together to profile the learning needs of the student and to plan how best to meet those needs.

## What we will build on

- Current work to design and test a reliable and valid tool for teachers to profile individual students with disability and their skills, strengths and functional education needs, in collaboration with parents, to inform their programming and planning.

## What we will do now

We will develop materials to support teachers and schools in assessing the impact of disability on the learning of students. This will inform planning to meet the individual learning and support needs of students.

### We will:

- Accelerate the development of a functional assessment tool for teachers to profile the learning and support needs of individual students in collaboration with students and their parents.
- Develop a standards framework and best practice guide to support the development of personalised learning and support for students with disability, in line with the State Plan, *NSW 2021*.
- Develop and implement training for teachers to support the use of a functional assessment tool and to support planning for personalised learning and support, in collaboration with students and their parents.

## This will result in

- Teachers being better equipped to identify the strengths, abilities, skills and learning needs of students with disability in collaboration with students and their parents and carers.
- Planning for adjustments to support the educational needs of individual students with disability being informed by their functional educational needs, rather than their disability type or label.



# Access to information and expert support

Most students who have additional learning and support needs are well supported through quality teaching and learning in their schools and through additional support available to their teachers and schools.

A small number of students with a disability need highly specialised support for learning. In some cases, this support requires expertise and input from a range of professional areas, such as education, allied health services and assistive technologies.

Parents, teachers and principals have told us that they want better access to clear and easy to understand information about how best to support students with a disability and the services available to support them.

## What we will build on

- Establishment in 2011 of the NSW Centre for Effective Reading, a joint initiative with NSW Health and the Royal Far West school providing support for rural and remote primary school aged students with complex reading difficulties and their teachers.
- The launch of the new *Physical as Anything.com* website in 2011, a joint initiative with NSW Health supporting students with medical, developmental and psychological conditions.
- Finalisation in 2010 of a memorandum of understanding between NSW Health, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and Community Services for improving access to therapy services for people with disability.

- Funding agreements with non-government disability services for the provision of specialist assistive technology services.

## What we will do now

- We will improve accessibility of information about supporting the learning needs of students with disability. We will also enhance access to specialist support for students with disability and resources for students with high or complex additional learning and support needs.

### We will:

- Develop an improved website to support teachers, principals, parents and the community to understand how we work to support students with additional learning and support needs in public schools, the services we provide, how they are accessed and how to deal with any concerns if they arise.
- Further develop specialist information for schools about disability and related health conditions and implications for learning in collaboration with NSW Health, and Ageing, Disability and Home Care.
- Establish an academic partnership with Sydney University through the NSW Centre for Effective Reading to undertake research on support for students with complex reading difficulties and their teachers.
- Trial new approaches around the use of specialist assistive technologies for students, in collaboration with other government and non-government agencies. This will include:

- Students with complex mobility and communication support needs,
- Students with conductive hearing loss in high need areas and
- Live captioning in classrooms for students who are deaf
- support for skills development in Auslan
- Develop and trial new models for supporting students with disability who have high and complex health care needs.
- Develop and implement a strategy to better support students who have additional learning and support needs and their families living in rural and remote areas, in collaboration with other agencies.

### This will result in:

- Improved access to expert support and consistent, reliable information for school leaders, teachers and parents about identifying and supporting the educational needs of students with disability.
- Identification of new and sustainable ways to support students with complex or highly specialist support needs to inform long term policy development.

# Implementing learning and support in 2012 and 2013

## Timeframes

*Every Student, Every School* is a complex initiative with multiple, integrated project activities taking place progressively over the next two years.

Project activities will start at different times. A strong focus of this initiative is supporting all school communities to understand and implement robust learning and support in every school.

Schools, regions and state office will all have responsibilities for implementing different aspects of *Every Student, Every School*. These responsibilities will change during different stages of the initiative.

Each region has established an implementation team responsible for leading and coordinating this initiative in regions and their schools. Each team is being led by a school education director who will work under the direction of their Regional Director.

Each region will develop and implement plans for establishing learning and support and related project activities through this initiative. This will be in consultation with schools, taking account of local needs and priorities.

Terms 1 and 2, 2012 will see a strong focus on communication and information for school communities about the initiative and timeframes for action, including principals, teachers, parents and community stakeholders.

Some project activities will commence immediately, including professional learning projects and work to develop instruments and materials to support students and teachers.

Some projects will be introduced and implemented over a longer timeframe.

This includes the re-organising of some specialist services and programs and allocation of these resources directly to mainstream schools.

Early in Term 2, 2012, regular school principals will be provided with details about the specialist resources, including specialist teachers and funding, to be allocated for progressive implementation from Term 3, 2012.

This time-frame will allow time for local planning and consultation about the implementation of learning and support in each school. This will be conducted by regions throughout Term 2, 2012.

## Evaluation

The Commonwealth will undertake an independent evaluation of the National Partnership and its effectiveness in achieving its objective – that is, for Australian schools and teachers being better able to support students with disabilities.

The Department of Education and Communities and participating schools will provide information and data about the implementation of the initiative *Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support*, to inform the national evaluation.

The Department will also provide progress reports to the Commonwealth during the operation of the National Partnership Agreement.

## Further information

[www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school)

Ongoing updates and information about progress in NSW public schools will be made available on the website.

**NSW Department of Education and Communities Regional contact numbers for implementation of *Every Student, Every School***

Hunter/Central Coast  
T 4348 9100

Illawarra & South East  
T 4267 6100

New England  
T 6755 5017

North Coast  
T 6652 0500

Northern Sydney  
T 9987 3900

Riverina  
T 6937 3835

South Western Sydney  
T 9796 5491

Sydney  
T 9217 3446

Western NSW  
T 6392 8400

Western Sydney  
T 9208 7611



## For more information

Further information about *Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support* can be accessed at: [www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school)



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