INCLUSION WORKING GROUP
DISABILITY FOCUS

Meeting 2 – 11 March 2014

Theme 1 – ‘Improved teaching quality and support’.

Background
Formed late in 2013, The Department of Education held its second Inclusion Working Group – Disability Focus on 11 March 2014, meeting with key stakeholders from around the state. This working group is chaired by the Department of Education’s Secretary – Colin Pettit and it is investigating better ways to support schools, students and parents in being inclusive school communities.

In doing this focus work on inclusion of students with disability, the broad representation of the group will ensure no other equity groups are excluded in the process.

For more background on the group please see Communiqué 1.

Work Plan
The working group will provide advice and strategic direction to school communities on how we can better build inclusive school communities. This group is committed to making our schools a better place for our students.

This Inclusion Working Group meeting focused on the inclusive education area of ‘Improved teaching quality and support’.

Members provided pre-reading articles on this area for the group and discussions were had around common themes.

The articles that were used to help guide the discussions for the session included:

- Dilemmas in inclusive education: What does it mean to be an inclusive educator?
- Teacher Assistant Supports in Inclusive Schools: Research, Practices and Alternatives
- Australian Association of Special Education Inc. Position Paper – Teacher Aides
- A Student with a Disability Has the Same Rights as any Other
The discussion included the following as critical areas to building inclusive school communities through 'Improved teaching quality and support':

1. How can we implement inclusive values and behaviours to be central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies?

2. Why should learning be based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students?

3. Why are approaches that are based on teachers being trained to identify characteristics of learning difficulties and then selecting appropriately matched interventions and adjustments essential?

4. How will our school leadership give priority to inclusion and consistently promote an ethos of achievement, empowerment, engagement and self-esteem for all students?

5. How will we support mainstream teachers and administrators (e.g., by providing time, training, teamwork, resources, and strategies)?

6. How will we provide flexibility for teacher assistants to work across a variety of classes and students to develop skills and participate in professional learning?

7. How will we implement an inclusive practice with each teacher understanding the importance of:
   - being personally inclusive of students, parents and of others
   - treating each student as an individual
   - not using labels
   - learning from good practitioners and quality practice research and reflecting on their own practice?

The analysis of these discussions will form the basis of recommendations for advice and direction to school communities which will be provided by August 2014.

Next meeting is scheduled for 16 April 2014 and the group will look at the inclusive education theme of A greater say for school communities and improved information for parents, schools and community.

Membership
School communities who would like to provide input into the work of the Working Group are invited to contact the relevant organisation; please see the Inclusion Working Group – Disability Focus webpage.