



Strengthening Inclusive Education Support

SASPA POSITION PAPER ON IESP REFORM

Purpose

SASPA welcomes the Department for Education's commitment to strengthening inclusive education and acknowledges recent improvements to the Inclusive Education Support Program (IESP), including Practice Guidance, refinements to Levels 1 - 3 processes and efforts to reduce administrative burden. However, for students requiring Levels 4 - 9 support, the application process remains overly complex, time-consuming and inconsistent. Reform is needed to reduce unnecessary administration, strengthen professional trust and ensure resources are directed towards supporting students rather than completing paperwork.

SASPA calls for the following:

1. Streamline the application process

- Eliminate repeated functional assessments for students with enduring disabilities
- Increase the supplementary grant to include Levels 4, 5 and 6 (Substantial)
- Use existing NCCD, diagnostic, allied health, departmental and school evidence wherever possible
- Establish and adhere to clear timeframes for each stage of the application process
- Work on developing an EDChat powered APP that replaces the current application process
- Provide transition arrangements that maintain funding continuity for students moving between primary and secondary schools, or entering from the non-government sector, to prevent delays caused by competing priorities or application timeframes.

2. Strengthen support for schools

- At a minimum, double the Site Support Function team to provide comprehensive and proactive assistance to ALL schools
- Provide targeted professional learning for staff completing IESP applications
- Redeploy panel capacity towards capability building, professional learning and direct school support

3. Improve consistency and transparency

- Publish a clear definition of enduring disability and a minimal review process for identified students
- Implement a process to ensure that when a student transitions from a special options class into mainstream, while remaining eligible for special options, the IESP Category 5 funding transfer occurs automatically rather than requiring schools to submit an EdInclude ticket.
- Publish clear assessment criteria and moderation processes for all other application and review processes
- Provide timely, meaningful and actionable feedback when applications do not attract the requested resourcing, including practical advice beyond general reference to Quality Teaching and Differentiated Practice (QTDP).

4. Improve planning and certainty

- Notify schools of their IESP supplementary grant allocations **by Monday, Week 9 of Term 3**, enabling effective workforce and resource planning
- Communicate expected application, assessment and decision timeframes clearly and consistently
- Align funding with a school year, so that qualified ancillary staffing can be secured for the school year
- Provide data to secondary schools of all transitioning students included in the Supplementary Grant at the NCCD census in primary school in year 6 at the same time as enrolment data is provided to secondary sites.



- Provide Secondary schools with access to approved funding applications that occurred in primary school for transitioning year 7 students so they can understand the adjustments in place and ensure continuity of learning and support.

5. Reduce duplication across systems

- Align IESP criteria and language with NCCD, NDIS, Health and emerging foundational support systems
- Minimise repeated evidence collection and assessment across agencies

Current Challenges

SASPA members consistently report that current IESP processes:

- require 20–40 hours per Level 4 - 6 application, with some taking substantially longer
- require duplicate applications when students transition to secondary school (and other transitions points), delaying essential support
- repeatedly assess students with enduring (permanent and stable) disabilities despite no change in need
- create uncertainty through unclear criteria, inconsistent panel decisions, limited feedback and lengthy timeframes.

These challenges reduce the time educators can spend supporting students and delay access to essential resources. They are consistently reflected in SASPA member feedback, which identifies administrative burden, inconsistent decision-making and duplication as the greatest barriers to effective support.

Principles for Reform

- **Student-centred:** Processes should maximise student participation, learning, wellbeing and inclusion.
- **Use existing evidence:** Existing evidence should be used before new information is requested.
- **Trust professional judgement:** Schools should be trusted to provide accurate evidence while maintaining appropriate accountability.
- **Transparency and consistency:** Assessment criteria, moderation, feedback and timelines should be clear, consistent and predictable.
- **Integrated support:** IESP should align with other disability and support systems to reduce duplication and place the child or young person at the centre.

Conclusion

SASPA supports an inclusive education system that is student-centred, evidence-informed and founded on professional trust. Streamlining IESP processes will reduce administrative burden, improve consistency and enable schools to devote more time and resources to supporting children and young people with disability and additional needs.