

Question on Notice

No. 169

Asked on 18 February 2020

MR L MILLAR ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to special needs primary students on the Central Highlands, given that parents are reporting their special needs children are suffering considerable distress attempting to integrate into mainstream classes at Emerald North State School—

Will the Minister outline the transition plan and whether it has a graduated or individualised approach?

ANSWER:

In 2017 the decision was made to transition the Special Education Unit (SEU) at Emerald North State School to an inclusion model in order to both increase students with disability socialisation with their peers and to ensure their access to relevant curriculum.

A graduated transition plan has occurred through extensive collaboration and planning.

Initially, students with disability participated in small group activities with their peers, accessing the Australian Curriculum: General Capabilities.

In 2018, increased classroom access for all students occurred, supported by additional one-on-one meetings between parents and staff to discuss curriculum and social emotional supports during transition.

Staff capability development in understanding the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth) and catering for the needs of all students was facilitated by the Department of Education's regional support staff.

The school also increased staffing to support the individual needs of students in classrooms.

Since 2019, ongoing parent/carer consultation and feedback, along with increased resourcing, capability development and expert coaching have aided the changing model of service delivery to provide all students with access to the Australian Curriculum with their similar aged peers.

The inclusion of students with disability has enabled them to learn alongside their similar aged peers with reasonable adjustments and to access and participate in the curriculum.

Continued negotiation occurs with parents, carers ensuring appropriate support for students and developing high trust relationships with school staff.

Staff developed and shared with parents, timetables for structured class support, gradually increasing classroom time over each term. Close monitoring of students, their academic achievements and social/emotional requirements ensured support measures were varied and individualised to meet the needs of each student.

Ongoing communication with parents/carers regarding the transition of all students continues to be a focus in 2020. Increased staffing, resourcing and continued support for all staff to adjust the Australian Curriculum, responsive to the needs of all students continue to be prioritised.

The space that housed the SEU continues to be utilised for additional support for students with high needs.