**ISSUE: Inclusive education**

(See Article 24 on page 16 of DPO Australia Submission to the CRPD)

**Background**

The current education system in Australia is failing to adequately meet the needs of students with disability, and it is rare for students with disability to be provided with a genuine inclusive educational experience.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Despite available data showing that 90.2% of students with disability attend regular or mainstream schools, only 36% of people with disability aged 15-64 years complete secondary education compared to 60% of people without disability.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) states that there has been “a shift towards students with disability attending special schools and away from attending special classes in mainstream schools” between 2003 and 2015.[[3]](#endnote-3) The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern about the increase in segregated education during the constructive dialogue with Australia in May 2017, and recommended that Australia implement measures to ensure children with disability had access to inclusive education.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Students with disability routinely experience discrimination, lack of resources and supports, inadequately trained teachers, a lack of expertise and a deeply entrenched systemic culture of low expectations.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Students with disability are also experiencing disturbing rates of bullying and situations of restraint and seclusion. There are an increasing number of incidents being reported of children with disability being placed in ‘withdrawal spaces’, which effectively amount to restraint and seclusion in fenced off spaces, cages and cupboards.[[6]](#endnote-6)

**Proposed Questions**

**Please update the Committee on progress toward reform of law, policy and practice across the education system to ensure the rights of students with disability to an inclusive education are upheld.**

Please provide disaggregated data on the participation, completion rates, suspensions, restraint and seclusion of students with disability in both segregated and inclusive education settings, and across all levels of education and training. Have these rates increased or decreased since last review?

Please provide details on all measures taken to ensure the *Disability Standards in Education (2005)* are assisting people with disability to achieve the objectives set out in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), including in relation to legal reform.

**Endnotes**

1. See e.g., People with Disability Australia, ‘Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the current levels of access and attainment for students with disability in the school system, and the impact on students and families associated with inadequate levels of supports’, 28 August 2015; People with Disability Australia, ‘Submission to the NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee 3, Inquiry into Students with a disability or special needs in New South Wales schools’, March 2017; Children with Disability Australia, ‘Hear Our Voices: Submission to the Senate Inquiry into current levels of access and attainment for students with disability in the school system, and the impact on students and families associated with inadequate levels of supports’, August 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Children with Disability Australia, ibid; see also, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, ‘Disability in Australia: changes over time in inclusion and participation in education’, 2017, Cat. No. DIS 69. Canberra: AIHW. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Australia*, UN Doc E/C.12/AUS/CO/5, paras 55-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. People with Disability Australia, op. cit.; Children with Disability Australia, op. cit. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See e.g., See: Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (16 August 2016) *School investigated after claims boy with autism locked in 'cage'*, accessed online at: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2016/s4520872.htm>. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (31 August 2016) *School accused of leaving teen with autism outside on beanbag for whole term*, accessed online at: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2016/s4530412.htm>. SkyNews (27 March 2017) *Teachers accused of abusing children: inquiry*, accessed online at: <http://www.skynews.com.au/news/national/nsw/2017/03/27/teachers-accused-of-abusing-children--inquiry.html>. The Canberra Times (11 August 2016) *Autism cage details emerge as United Nations investigates abuse of children*; accessed online at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/autism-cage-details-emerge-as-united-nations-investigates-abuse-of-children-20160809-gqo7m8.html>. The Courier-Mail (August 10, 2016), *New report highlights alarming treatment of children with disabilities in Queensland schools*, accessed online at: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/new-report-highlights-alarming-treatment-of-children-with-disabilities-in-queensland-schools/news-story/11657109f56ac9f0142de3c0af8014ee> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)