

Greens' Inclusive Education Policy a good step forward

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The Inclusive Education Action Group (IEAG) welcomes the Greens' commitment to base New Zealand's education system on the principles of inclusion and the provision of need.

Responding to the Greens' election policy 'Every child thriving: Education for every child', IEAG Co-convenor Bernadette Macartney says "It is refreshing to read a policy that acknowledges disabled people's right to an inclusive education and that the current special education system requires an extensive overhaul for this to be realised."

Dr Macartney adds "Any review must be comprehensive and involve the disability and education sectors from the beginning through to its conclusions and implementation. What has been missing to date is the leadership and voices of disabled people, their families, advocates and allies, including centres and schools."

In the short term, doubling the numbers of students receiving Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) will help relieve some of the pressure on schools, especially those schools who have a reputation and track record of providing an inclusive environment and education. These become magnet schools for disabled students because families and students choose them over schools that aren't inclusive, yet these schools currently do not receive additional funds.

Increased funding to early intervention services is also welcome. Early intervention support and advice to families and centres has become run down over many years. The provision of timely and quality early intervention will ensure students with learning disabilities get the best start and can participate meaningfully in the education system.

IEAG is a group of disabled people, their families, education professionals, researchers and disability advocates committed to ensuring that all disabled children, young people and adults may participate fully in their local, regular educational setting. We believe:

- All children and young people have the right to learn together, so that they can develop relationships, skills and knowledge for everyday life.
- No disabled person should be denied the right to participate fully in education alongside others of their age.
- The role of education is to support people to be and become participating citizens in a civil democratic society.
- To achieve inclusive education the education system must change so that it has the resources, understandings, values and commitment to teach all children well in non-discriminatory settings.
- Inclusion is a process of removing barriers to participation and learning for all children.

ENDS

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