

“All I want is what’s  
best for my child.”



SUMMARY OF A RESEARCH REPORT ON THE EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS FROM  
A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND WITH DISABILITY IN THE NSW SCHOOL SYSTEM



Huyen is in Year 2 at her local school. She has an intellectual disability and receives integration funding to support her enrolment in a regular classroom. Her mother believes she needs more support than the teacher can provide and wants her to attend a Support Class at a school in a nearby suburb. She has requested the move at two parent interviews: nine months later nothing has happened. Huyen's mother doesn't know why she has not been moved and worries that she is falling further behind, has no friends and is very unhappy.

*"All I want is what's best for my child."*





## Key Issues:

- Ensuring early diagnosis of disability and access to early intervention programs for students from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their parents.
  - Ensuring co-ordination and communication between different service sectors, such as health, education and disability is facilitated and accessible to all students from a NESB with disability and their parents.
  - Ensuring that all families from a NESB are aware of the educational choices available for their child with disability.
  - Ensuring clear, informative communication between the school system and parents from a NESB.
  - Ensuring the development of good educational practice, including effective implementation of multicultural perspectives across the curriculum of all classes, including support classes, SSP and for students with disability in regular classrooms.
  - Ensuring education is provided in a culturally competent way.
  - Ensuring that waiting lists for support classes, Schools for Special Purposes (SSP) and support services for students with disability integrated into regular classrooms are reduced and managed equitably and transparently.
  - Ensuring policies and procedures are accessible to parents from a NESB.
  - Ensuring parents from a NESB who wish to change current arrangements for their child's education are aware of and able to participate in the student review and reappraisal process that the school has in place.
  - Ensuring equitable distribution of funding for all students with disability, including students from a NESB with disability.
- Ensuring that the options available to students after completing their school education are effectively communicated to parents and students from a NESB.

**For all key issues and recommendations, a full report is available at [www.mdaa.org.au](http://www.mdaa.org.au)**

“Recently the school told me that the funding for Hao’s teacher’s aide time has been cut for next year. He has a language delay and mild autism but has been doing well so I want him to keep the funding so he continues to do well because after next year he goes to high school. I tried to make an appointment to see the Principal but I couldn’t get in to see him. I went home and rang the TIS (telephone interpreter service) and rang the school to speak to the Principal. Through the interpreter I explained why I wanted to speak to him. He said he knew and he couldn’t do anything about it. He wouldn’t discuss it any more...

*I don’t understand why this is happening and who’s going to help him.”*

## Key recommendations:

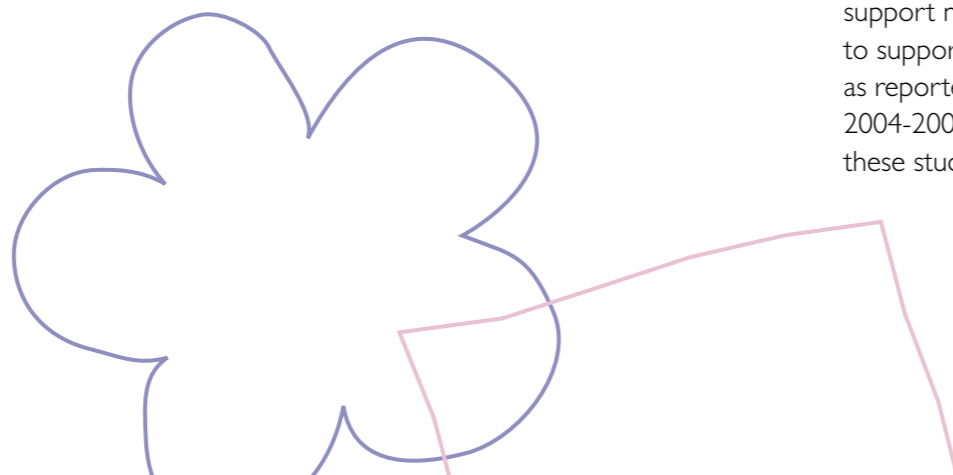
- 1 All education systems appoint community based workers who:
  - Are trained in cultural competence.
  - Are trained in disability awareness.
  - Are trained in communication skills and conflict resolution.
  - Are based in local schools.
  - Know about the health, education, community and government services sectors and how these link.
  - Coordinate, facilitate and liaise with different service providers, agencies and families from a NESB to ensure that services are accessed equitably by students from a NESB with disability and their parents.
  - Facilitate links between local communities and school.
  - Develop ongoing relationships with students and their families as a source of information and support.
  - Participate in all information sessions for the school community.
- 2 All education systems provide cultural competence training for all staff to ensure that cultural competence is core business in practices and policies, in all schools, classrooms and within curriculum.
- 3 Funding criteria across all education systems are consistent for providing support to students with disability and students from a NESB. The criteria for access to support services must be based on individual student needs and take into account the student’s migration/ refugee history, English language skills, impact of the disability on their learning, their school results, geographical location, socio-economic indicators, demographic profiles and trends, using assessment tools that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

## Some facts:

- 41.3% of people in NSW were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas.
- 24.3% of people in NSW speak one of 144 languages other than English at home.
- 16.6% of young people in NSW between the ages of 5-17 years speak a language other than English at home.
- Over 26% of all students enrolled in DET schools in 2004 were from a NESB.
- Over 16,000 students with disability (2.1% of the total DET enrolment) in 2004 were enrolled in Support classes or Schools for Special Purposes, and over 26% of these students were from a NESB.
- Over 16,000 students with disability or learning support needs were receiving integration funding to support their enrolment in regular classrooms, as reported in the DET Disability Action Plan 2004-2005. It is not known what percentage of these students are from a NESB.

## What you can do:

- Celebrate important cultural days and festivals at school - invite parents and members of local communities to bring food to share - have fun.
- Take part in cultural competence and disability awareness training.
- Identify student language and learning needs as early as possible by communicating with early childhood centres, pre-schools and child health service providers.
- Appoint a school staff member to coordinate student access to all available support and services and to explain to parents any changes to policy and funding criteria.
- Ensure that families from a NESB are aware of all enrolment options when they are deciding where their child with disability will attend school.
- Find a way to HEAR parents from a NESB who come to ask questions or raise concerns.
- Use telephone interpreter services.
- Translate information into relevant community languages.
- Use community based workers wherever they are available or create networks within your local community to help distribute information and assist communication between the school and families from a NESB.



# About MDAA

The Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA) is the peak body in NSW for people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their families and carers.

MDAA is the only advocacy service available in NSW specifically for people from a NESB with disability, their families and carers.

## Our mission

MDAA aims to promote, protect and secure the rights and interests of people from a NESB with disability and their families and carers in NSW.

## Our objectives

MDAA is working towards:

- Promoting, protecting and advocating for the rights of people from a NESB with disability and their families and carers in NSW.
- Access & Equity for people from a NESB with disability and their families and carers in NSW in the government and non-government sector.
- Improving the quality of life for people from a NESB with disability and their families and carers.
- Increasing the participation of people from a NESB with disability and their families and carers in community activities.

## Our services

MDAA has four main services:

- Individual Advocacy
- Systemic Advocacy
- Advocacy Development
- Industry Development

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