



Purple Orange

# An inclusive education is every child's right

All children should be welcomed and supported at their local school and provided with a **high-quality inclusive education**. Sadly, for too many children and young people with disability in South Australia, this is not the case.

Decades of research and evidence tells us that **inclusive education best prepares students living with disability for life and success**. Research also demonstrates that students without disability benefit from inclusive education. These benefits include a more positive sense of self, enhanced communication and language development, increased awareness of diversity and a higher quality education that is better suited to individual needs.

Article 24 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* enshrines the **right** of people living with disability to an **inclusive education**. Meeting this right requires signatories (including Australia) to ensure that children and young people with disability are **included in mainstream education, in their local communities, on the same basis as students without disability**, and that they receive reasonable accommodations and supports.

However, students living with disability face challenges in accessing mainstream education and often face discrimination, segregation from their non-disabled peers, bullying, restrictive practices, and suspensions or expulsions. **These practices need to stop!** Mainstream education must mean inclusive education, **where every student is a valued member of that local school community**. All children need to feel welcomed and supported in their local school and the government needs to be firm in their position on this.

We recognise some South Australian families have made the decision for their child to use special education schools or special units, sometimes because of poor previous experiences with mainstream provision. We also recognise that there are dedicated educators working in those settings. We do not advocate that those decision-makers be disrespected, nor those educators devalued. Instead, **we advocate that these students have the opportunity to go to the local school in their local community and get an authentic inclusive education**.

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JFA Purple Orange is an independent social-profit organisation that undertakes systemic policy analysis and advocacy across a range of issues affecting people living with disability and their families.

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We further advocate that **new special education provision should not be built** and that this funding be redirected to ensuring that **mainstream schools are routinely inclusive in their habits**. Otherwise, exclusionary habits will persist and will deepen the demand for separate segregated provision.

Building an inclusive education system takes **leadership and investment from government**. *Australia's Disability Strategy* highlights the importance of inclusive education and commits to building capability in the delivery of inclusive education to improve educational outcomes. **We call on the South Australian government to take action to bring this commitment to life.**

Building an inclusive education system won't happen overnight; work is needed to map out the pathway and build the capability of South Australian schools. Inclusive education requires **resourcing**, a focus on the **capacity development** of staff, and a **cultural shift in expectations, language, and beliefs**. But the intent needs to be clear and measurable progress must be in place now.

We urge all parties and candidates to **commit** to:

- A **policy statement** in support of inclusive education (similar to the Queensland Inclusive Education Policy Statement)
- Investing in the development of an **Inclusive Education Strategy**
- Providing **funding to South Australian schools** to implement inclusive education frameworks.
- **Not** establishing any new special schools or units.

We also urge parties to centre the **voice of young people living with disability** to ensure that the new framework is built to reflect the needs of those it is designed to support. These commitments will make us **leaders** in best practice education and honour our **national and international obligations**. And importantly, it provides for the education system that **children and young people living with disability rightfully deserve**.

**For further information, please contact Robbi Williams, CEO of JFA Purple Orange, on (08) 8373 8333 or [robbiw@purpleorange.org.au](mailto:robbiw@purpleorange.org.au).**