

Aspect Autism in Education Conference

Melbourne 5-6 May 2015

Students with autism in ACT schools- the implications of the recent report from the expert panel on students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

I was one of an expert panel of three (Emeritus Professor Tony Shaddock; Dr Sue Packer; Mr Alasdair Roy) established by the ACT Minister for Education and Training in 2015 to review policy and practice in all ACT schools in regard to students with complex needs and challenging behaviours. The title of the report of this review is "Schools FOR ALL children and young people" and in my presentation I will discuss those aspects of the report which are pertinent for students with a diagnosis of autism.

In developing the report, the evidence from all sources pointed to two overarching and complementary conclusions as indicated in the title of the report. First that schools exist FOR children and young people and therefore policies and practices should always be in each student's best interests. Second, that schools are for ALL children and young people and therefore policies and practices must be planned and delivered so that they are inclusive of all students' best interests.

The Panel formed the view that if these two simple propositions were thoroughly understood and rigorously enacted throughout school systems and schools they would have a pervasive, positive and in some cases transformational effect on the school experience and behaviour for many- and maybe all-students.-

My discussion will also include reflections on my experiences and practical learning over some 30 years working as a community paediatrician in ACT, with a particular interest in the education of children who have experienced trauma in aspects of their lives, including traumatic experiences at school.