

Your name and title
Your address and phone
number

The Hon. / Mr/ Ms/ Mrs __ __
ADDRESS

(check their title on the NSW Parliament website: <http://bit.ly/2bccR11>)

DATE 2017

To The Hon. ____ ____ OR
Dear / Mr/ Ms/ Mrs ____ ____

Re: Inclusive education for children with disabilities

I am writing to you as a local constituent to seek a meeting.

- Give a little about your story. E.g. I am the parent of a young man with Down syndrome. Like all parents, I want the best for my son, and it came to my attention that inclusive education would lead to the best results for him, academically, socially, and later in life, vocationally. Expand on this further if you wish.

I am writing to explain to you some of the difficulties I have had accessing inclusive education for my son/daughter in NSW and to ask for your assistance in improving access to inclusive education for students in NSW:

- Describe some of the barriers you have faced in accessing inclusive education for your son or daughter.
- Some facts you may wish to include:
 - o The recent NSW Auditor General's report on the support for students in NSW public schools found that around 25 per cent of parents had been told by staff there was no place for their child at their local school. (Audit Office of NSW 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2nCoOhg>)
 - o Australian and international evidence overwhelmingly suggests that both students with disability and their non-disabled peers benefit academically, socially and vocationally from inclusive education (See, for example, Cologon, Kathy 2013 *Inclusion in Education: Toward a Better Outcome for Students with Disability*, Children with Disability Australia, available from <http://www.cda.org.au/inclusion-in-education>).
 - o Segregated school and unit numbers are increasing: evidence from the Department of Education (DoE) shows that support classes increased from 2340 in 2012 to 2850 in 2016, and that Schools for Specific Purposes Special schools increased by 1609 students between 2010 and 2016, a 19.4 per cent increase.

I ask that you raise these issues with the NSW Education Minister, Rob Stokes, at your earliest possible convenience. Our experience is far too common. As part of Family Advocacy, a NSW Association concerned with the rights and interests of people with disability, we are seeking:

1. That the NSW Department of Education train all principals and classroom teachers in strategies for adjusting the environment, curriculum and assessment, interpreting and redirecting behaviour, and the right of all students to be welcomed and educated in the regular class at their local school.
2. That Minister Stokes direct schools to enrol local children in the regular class as the default option, given it is best practice for students with disability and their peers.
3. That the Minister and Department require schools to give all parents information about the rights of all children to enrol in their local school when parents approach schools about enrolment, and at any stage when a disability or functional impairment is identified.

I also request a meeting with you in the next month to six weeks to discuss inclusive education and the issues I have raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Your name (include both names if writing as a couple)

- Sign off, send, and then follow up by phone one week after sending by asking to speak with the Member's diary manager. If they say that s/he will call back, get a name and email address. Call back again the following day and the one after that until you get a response; this can be uncomfortable but it is their job to respond.
- Some final tips:
 - o You can find your electorate here: <http://streetlist.elections.nsw.gov.au/>
 - o Contact details and titles for NSW lower house MPs can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2bccR11>
 - o Try to keep the letter to 1-2 pages (two full pages maximum)
 - o Print and proof read before sending
 - o Send the letter as an attachment to their email address – the attachment makes it easier for the diary manager
- If you get a meeting:
 - o Family Advocacy has provided a one-page summary of the issue to give to your MP here:
 - o A more detailed position statement is available here: <http://family-advocacy.com/assets/FA-position-statement-inclusive-education-2016.pdf>
 - o Tips for meetings are available here:
 - o If you want some assistance preparing for the meeting, call Meg on (02) 9869 0866 or email on meg@family-advocacy.com

Well done!