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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Isolated and Ignored: NSW Government's Draft Policy Leaves Students with Disabilities suspended

The NSW government is stuck in the dark ages as their draft behaviour policy continues to harm children and families and lacks acknowledgement of the current education systems failing in meeting the needs of students with disability.

Disability advocacy organisations are extremely disappointed and dismayed to hear the NSW Minister for Education has announced a planned overhaul to the NSW public school student behaviour policy without consulting any students, families or disability advocacy organisations. The original policy, developed by the previous government, aimed to address the many inequities inherent in the current system by ensuring accountability at local schools. It's extremely concerning that the government has sought only to consult with educator groups and unions and not disability advocacy organisations who hear firsthand the many issues that instigated the previous government's Behaviour Policy measures.

The government's announcement strongly highlights the practice of scapegoating students whilst evading the responsibility of NSW public schools to do better.

The draft policy, which gives Principals the power to extend the length of suspensions, contradicts the NSW Department of Education's own evidence provided to the Disability Royal Commission at Public Hearing 7 - Education, where it stated "*we know that suspension rates for vulnerable students in NSW are too high, and disproportionately so for students with disability, Aboriginal students, students in rural and remote areas, students in out of home care and students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage. Most importantly, there is no evidence that suspension is an effective mechanism for improving or managing student behaviour. Suspension does not provide students with the support they need to achieve behavioural change when they return to the classroom, so we need to provide new and better alternatives.*" (Public Hearing No. 7 - Response to Questions on Notice - State of NSW - 16 July 2021)

This week's announcement points to an extremely detrimental and flawed consultation process when students, families and disability advocacy groups have not been consulted.

Students with disability have a right to learn, and be supported to thrive. Suspensions are ineffective. Suspensions won't change anything because our kids need support, not punishment. We know that experience shows that using suspensions sparingly alongside supportive interventions yields better outcomes for students, families, and teachers.

We call on the NSW government to stall the current process and engage in meaningful consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

*CYDA - Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

<https://www.cyda.org.au/>

*Family Advocacy <https://www.family-advocacy.com/>

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About Family Advocacy

We work with people with disabilities and their families to help them defend and promote the interests and rights of people with developmental disability across NSW.

About CYDA

Our purpose is to ensure governments, communities and families, are empowering children and young people with disability to fully exercise their rights and aspirations.

CONTACT:

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