

Make disability funding follow the child

A growing number of students with disability are leaving mainstream school — often due to trauma and anxiety at having their needs unmet — but the funding and support do not follow them. When the system cannot meet a student's needs, the resources should travel with the child.



Evidence brief for members of parliament



July 2026 · sources verified

WHAT WE'RE ASKING FOR

- ✓ Where a student's needs can't be met at their school, let disability funding follow them to home schooling, distance education or other alternative education settings.
- ✓ Provide real support and guidance for students transitioning out of — and back into — mainstream settings.
- ✓ Fund inclusion properly, so that staying in the mainstream is a genuinely resourced option.



Why it matters

More and more students with disability are leaving mainstream school — but the funding and support attached to them do not follow. Families who move to home schooling or distance education because the system could not meet their child's needs are largely left to manage alone, often at significant cost to their own work and wellbeing.

The evidence — who has already called for this

This reform is not a fringe idea. It is documented in government inquiries, audits and royal-commission findings, and championed by peak advocacy bodies. Every quote below links to its original source so you can read it in context.

NSW AUDITOR-GENERAL · 2025

"The Department does not provide any specific guidance or support for students transitioning into or out of alternative school settings, and the resources developed and provided for other types of transitions are not directly applicable."

Alternative School Settings and Home Schooling (Performance Audit), Audit Office of NSW, 2025. The same audit found the share of home-schooled students with disability rose from about 35% (2019) to an estimated 54% (2024). [Read the audit →](#)

NATIONAL DATA · CYDA 2026

"Just 1% of children in early childhood education receive Inclusion Support Program funding — despite around 20% having developmental or learning needs. Among school students who do receive support, 40% still need more help than they get."

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA), *Snapshot of children and young people with disability in Australia* (March 2026). When support inside the system falls this far short, families who move to home schooling or distance education are left with nothing following them. [Read the report →](#)

NATIONAL EVIDENCE BODY · AERO 2025

Barriers to school attendance and reasons for student absence (**AERO, 2025**) — a review for the national Student Attendance project. It identifies disability, health and mental-health conditions (including anxiety) and negative experiences at school among the drivers of student absence and school refusal. When school cannot meet a neurodivergent student's needs, absence — and departure — often follow; the funding should follow the child too. [Read the review →](#)

INCLUSIVE-ED ALLIANCE · ALL MEANS ALL

"Develop a funding model that allocates resources and incentives for inclusive educational environments to provide the necessary support to persons with disabilities."

All Means All — the Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education, citing the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. [Visit All Means All →](#)

PARENT ADVOCACY · FAMILY ADVOCACY (NSW)

"Parent choice is not real when inclusive options are under-resourced or unavailable."

Family Advocacy (NSW), systemic advocacy campaigns. [See the campaigns →](#)

INCLUSIVE-ED COALITION · ACIE

"Reform school funding models and move to functional needs-based funding (e.g. the Tasmanian model)."

Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE), *Driving Change* roadmap. [See the roadmap →](#)

At a glance — who has already called for this reform

Each ● marks a report, inquiry or body that has called for this reform. The full grid for all four priorities is on the Helen's Way Reform Agenda page.

GOVERNMENT REPORTS & INQUIRIES



NSW Report 52
(2024)



Auditor-General — Alternative Settings
(2025)



Disability Royal Commission
(2023)

PEAK & ADVOCACY BODIES



ACIE



All Means
All



Family
Advocacy

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Support a funding model that lets disability funding follow a student to home schooling or distance education when their school cannot meet their needs.

Call for guidance and support for students transitioning into and out of alternative settings.

Press for inclusion in mainstream schools to be properly resourced so families are not forced out.

This is about equity, not opting out: families are already leaving in growing numbers — the funding simply hasn't followed them.

See the full picture on our [Reform Agenda](#) and [Resources](#) pages.
