

17 February 2012

Education and Training Workforce: Schools  
Productivity Commission  
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East  
Melbourne VIC 8003

**RE: TEACHER TRAINING IN LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Dear Sir or Madam:

**1 in 10<sup>1</sup> Australian primary and secondary school students are estimated to have some form of learning disabilities (LD) – including dyslexia.**

LD causes major obstacles to learning and, if not addressed, has extensive economic and social implications for all concerned. Our community has a growing concern for the welfare of students with LD and their teachers due to:

- These students do not have the same access to the learning environment and curriculum because of the deficit of appropriate identification, intervention, remediation and accommodation in Australian classrooms;
- Australian teachers are unable to deliver the curriculum in an appropriate way that meets student or legislation requirements, including the Disability Discrimination Act or the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

Currently our teachers are not receiving sufficient 'pre' and 'in-service' training around effective pedagogy which makes the classroom accessible for students with LD. Little time is spent (if any) in most teacher training courses on either identifying or addressing learning disabilities – **leaving teachers without the knowledge or skill base to teach over 354,000 Australian students.**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Helping people with dyslexia: a national agenda. Report to the Hon Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, from the Dyslexia Working Party (2010)



This results in our teachers facing significant potential to experience OH&S work-related risks such as stress. More concerning, research demonstrates that there is a high correlation between unidentified and/or unaddressed/supported LD and educational disengagement, school failure, low school retention rates, juvenile delinquency, unemployment, incarceration, depression and suicide.

The good news is that research also indicates that students with LD who are identified and supported are able to lead productive lives where they positively contribute to our community and, more importantly, reach their own personal potential.

**The LD Network is urging the Schools Productivity Commission to include 'pre' and 'in-service' training on learning disabilities for all Australian teachers in their Report.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours truly,

Deborah A Zang  
Director, LD Network