

Dear Education and Training Workforce Commission,

We write to you as co-founders of a Dyslexia Support and Awareness Group in the Barossa Valley, South Australia. We are both health professionals and the parents of dyslexic children.

The journey to a diagnosis of Dyslexia that we have had to endure has been traumatic and costly and even with a diagnosis we have discovered that our children's education is not guaranteed. Dyslexia is poorly recognized in Australia and current teaching practices lack the skills and foresight to enable Dyslexic children to learn to the best of their ability. Many teachers have a very limited understanding of what Dyslexia means. It seems that teachers are inadequately trained in Dyslexia, both in its identification and in teaching/learning styles.

We strongly support the need for mandatory teacher education in learning disabilities, and the establishment of "Dyslexia friendly schools" so that students at risk of dyslexia are diagnosed and supported early, rather than the "wait to fail" approach, which is what is currently occurring. This "wait to fail" approach inevitably leads to Dyslexic children having low self esteem, low confidence, anxiety, exclusion, bullying and labelling.

We believe all children in Australia should receive the same opportunities to succeed in the education system. Currently there is a great inequity. Australian Dyslexics are not being catered for and as a nation we are very poor at recognising and empowering our Dyslexic children in comparison to other countries. As approximately 10 % of Australians have Dyslexia, this translates to 2 or 3 children in every Australian classroom. This is of national importance.

The grave inequity placed on our Dyslexic children is also a matter of human rights and social justice. We need to put steps in place that reduce this inequity so that all Australian children have equal access to education.

Thank you for this opportunity, your time and consideration,

Dr Sandra Marshall
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Mrs Kylie Fotheringham
RN, Health Promotion Facilitator