

Submission  
No 91

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES EDUCATIONAL  
SETTINGS**

**Organisation:** Parents of St Lucy's  
**Date Received:** 12 August 2024

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Partially  
Confidential

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

**From:** Olivera Cimino**Sent:** Monday, June 24, 2024 1:43 PM**Subject:** Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

Please see below a submission of our experience in commencing with St Lucy's after being within the public mainstream system.

I hope it is not too long, it was tricky to keep it short as so much can be said! Please feel free to use what you find useful and crop anything that isn't.

*Our son recently commenced at St Lucy's. He was in a support class within a public mainstream school from kindergarten to first term year 4. Our son had the same teacher and teachers aides the entire time at the mainstream school and after a while we felt there was a need for a change which the school couldn't provide. We also felt a growing lack of flexibility when it came to learning, social and life skill opportunities. The school and special needs families had a growing disconnect unfortunately.*

*Our son is about to complete his first term with St Lucy's and we are so impressed with all the teaching and support staff at St Lucy's, along with the education they are providing our son. Everyone is so aware, understanding and exceptionally skilled. Additionally we are always greeted with a warm welcome. Communication with our son's teacher is fantastic, we are told what they are learning that week, how they are engaging, who they socialised with and individualised weekly progress. Everything is run so efficiently which says a lot for a school that accommodates such a spectrum of disabilities. The difference is astonishing and we are so grateful, we wish we made the move sooner. We are happy to share further as we feel so much valuable feedback can be provided from families that have experienced different settings/schools.*

Kind Regards

Olivera

**Subject:**

FW: Response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

**From:** Nat Dechchavalit**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 1:32 PM**To:** Patricia McCarthy**Subject:** Response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

Dear Federal Disability Royal Commission

As parents of a 5-year-old daughter with an intellectual disability and a level-3 autism spectrum disorder, my wife and I have had first-hand experience of finding and commencing our daughter's, to a formal education of Kindergarten. Her application for St Gabriel's (School for Children with Mild and Moderate Disability) was unsuccessful as she would need more support than they could provide. With blessings, St Lucy's accepted (and us) with open arms. Not only is I given all support and opportunities from St Lucy's staff because of their invaluable expertise and extensive experience of educating children with special needs, but parents, grandparents, siblings and extended family members are hugely benefiting from St Lucy's support, networking and more importantly, compassion, love & care. Tea and tissues for Kindy mummies on Term 1 Day 1 was gratefully appreciated. These intangible assets cannot be and will not be obtained from any other forms of institutions like main-stream schools regardless of being public, Catholic or private. We are urging you to reconsider the recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings. These Children of God deserve the rights to be able to get the needed support in a specially-created environment by caring and specially-trained teachers and staff to thrive and reach their potential at whatever it may be.

Kind regards

Nat Dechavalit and Olive Supamool

Parents of Dechchavalit / Kindy Sloth

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**Subject:**

FW: Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings



**From:** Alaina Budd

**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 1:24 PM

**Subject:** Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

Hi

This is in regards to the royal commission about closing special needs schools in the future

I'm against the potential closing of these classes and schools because I have a 8 yr old son with Autism and a Mild Intellectual disability and since kindergarten has been with St Lucy's, not at their main campus but in their satellite classes. His Autism is mild but this makes it harder for us as he's not suitable yet for mainstream or higher needs classes or schools and these classes are perfect. If this was to be taken away he would definitely suffer in the school system as per his teacher and I know this myself.

You would not only be disadvantaging disability kids but also the mainstream students because they will be interrupted by kids who are higher needs

Alaina

**Subject:**

FW: Dimmick submission - I would be happy to be interviewed if needed

**Subject:** Dimmick submission - I would be happy to be interviewed if needed



I have twins who are now 15. One developing typically and the other with Cystic Fibrosis, Autism, ADHD, OCD, Celiac Disease and an Intellectual disability. Mainstream school is brutal, unsafe and stressful for everyone involved when you have child with extremely high support needs. I ignorantly sent my twins to Kindy together in 2015 which turned out to be the worst year ever. My daughter went to school with a privately paid school aid/shadow who was meant to be with her every second of the school day. My bored daughter with additional needs was attacking her typical developing sister who wanted to learn in class as she wanted her to play. My daughter with additional needs went missing one day and a huge search was launched. They had walked as a class to the swimming pool at the San hospital earlier in the week and she was found in the bathroom with the door locked with her inside having a wonderful time in the shower fully clothed. The trauma of that day has stuck with her sister as she was the one who told them they should search the pool vicinity. She could have drowned as she could not swim well at age 5. She was excluded from French class and even when they all made bunny ears at Easter she was excluded from an activity she could have easily done. They excluded her from school assemblies, chapel services and concerts. She did not go to school for term 3 and then got accepted into St Lucy's for the last term of Kindergarten. Our lives changed then and her education began. She can now read, write and do math. She has a dance scholarship and has become an excellent drummer. She has excelled in the special needs environment. She is a child who would run across the road if she saw a flower she wanted to pick and is not safe alone in an environment that is not fully fenced. She needs to be in the care of an adult who can manage her impulsive, and sometimes aggressive behaviour at all times in the community. Sending my daughter to a mainstream environment could result in her death and I am not exaggerating. I am so relieved this ridiculous recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools will not happen during my daughters time at school. I have never heard of a recommendation so preposterous in all my life and it absolutely beggars belief that it would even be considered!! The whole commission was an absolute waste of time and money and it shows how out of touch you really all are with the day to day environment of mainstream schools and also the needs of many children with high support requirements who also need and deserve an education. Please see a snapshot of her report from kindergarten. She got D's and E's in most subjects and my other daughter who also deserves to have an education without the distractions of a higher support needs child in her class got mostly A's.



A note for the committee.

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When it came to choosing a school for our son, there was no doubt in our mind that it would need to be a setting dedicated to those with special needs. [redacted] is autistic (ASD level 2), non verbal (apraxia) has various developmental delays (fine motor, independent toileting, self care) and struggles with his understanding of potential dangers/safety awareness to name a few.

In a mainstream school setting, something as seemingly unproblematic as an open gate could be disastrous in our case. Without constant supervision it is entirely likely that he would choose to wander (he has a very curious mind and loves to explore). I dread to think how quickly something like this can happen and without the ability to ask someone for help, or an awareness of existing dangers (strangers, crossing roads safely etc) what would happen.

At St Lucy's our son is supported in the areas in which he struggles and has made enormous progress over his 1.5 years of school thus far. He is celebrated for his areas of strength and is not underestimated. He is an important part of the school environment engaging with teachers and peers alike and absolutely loves going there every day.

With an older child attending our local mainstream school, I have had the opportunity to witness how some children with additional needs (in this specific instance, autism) are catered for in this environment and I can confidently say that it is simply not good enough. In instances I have seen children excluded, ignored or even singled out for behaviour that is beyond their control. Add to that a child that needs assistance toileting, or feeding, or needs lessons delivered in a different format and mainstream schools are just simply not equipped to deal with this.

While the continuing operation of special needs schools such as St Lucy's will not impact us personally beyond our own child, the thought of friends or family having a child with complex additional needs in the future and not having access to a place where their child is appropriately cared for, safe, and celebrated is heartbreaking and quite frankly, terrifying.

Our child, and others like him, are beautiful souls and deserve the very best in education as every other neurotypical child does also. At St Lucy's [redacted] is celebrated for all that he can do, and not underestimated or put to one side because of those he can not. They are doing incredible work and I truly hope that they, and other special support settings like them, are acknowledged for all that they do and the huge difference they are making in the lives of our children, and to us as parents knowing our children are safe, understood and thriving as every child should be.

Thanks,  
Rebecca Donnelly

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings. normal



**From:** cornel dsilva

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 3, 2024 9:15 AM

**Subject:** Re: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings. normal

As a parent of two children with special needs (ASD, intellectual disabilities..etc) I cannot even fathom how they would be able to get a sound education without 'special needs schools' such as St Lucy's.

Children in schools such as St Lucy's require high level of support from highly dedicated and specially trained teachers and support staff. St Lucy's not only has such teachers and support staff but over the years by being innovative have developed a unique method of teaching special needs children, frankly speaking this method should be patented and should serve as a benchmark for teaching excellence in special education.

Also the use of technology, state of the art facilities, learning spaces, outdoor spaces and the BEST team (school psychologists, therapist..etc) working in tandem with the teaching staff ensure our children are getting the best and specialised support they absolutely require.

St Lucy's provides fantastic support to parents by having a dedicated staff to support parents in everyway they can as they totally understand the challenges parents of special needs children face on a daily basis.

St Lucy's foster a sense of community by encouraging parents to support school activities via volunteering. Parents feel very supported in such a tight knit community.

While the government's plan to clump and dump special needs children into main stream schools may be beneficial for certain children for example neuro diverse children on the high end of the spectrum, it would be an **absolute disaster** for a majority of special needs children.

Regards

Cornel D'silva and Ella Chavez

(Parents of

proud year 3 and year 1 students @ St Lucy's School)

**Subject:**

FW: Paragraph for the submission



-----Original Message-----

From: Miia Groenewald ·

Sent: Monday, July 1, 2024 2:04 PM

Subject: Paragraph for the submission

From the moment we stepped into St Lucy's School for an open day, it was clear that this was the only choice for our son, [REDACTED]. We cried tears of joy and relief when we knew he would start kindergarten at St Lucy's. The school has provided him with a superior customised education, coupled with the essential support, care, and compassion he needs and deserves. [REDACTED] has thrived under these conditions. The prospect of educational options being restricted is inconceivable to us. Instead of limiting families choices, we believe that St Lucy's School should serve as a model to elevate the quality of available educational alternatives.

Miia & Ryan Groenewald

Sent from my iPhone



**Subject:**

FW:

experience at St Lucy's



**From:** Emma Hanna

**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 1:29 PM

**Subject:** experience at St Lucy's

Dear St Lucy's,

We had no idea what to expect when [redacted] started his education at St Lucy's.

It has exceeded our expectations and what we had thought we expected.

[redacted] has learnt to sit and engage in activities and has exceeded his goal.

He has learnt to take turns and wait.

He has learnt how to ride a bike using the pedals and learnt how to swim as well.

[redacted] would never have made these milestones if he was in a mainstream school environment.

Not to mention the safety as [redacted] has no idea about dangerous environments and runs without knowing what environment he is in.

We take him to school every day knowing that he is completely safe.

It has a great exceptional family connection and it is very warming to know that we as special needs families are not alone, we are one.

Kind Regards.

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings



From: Julie Hiser

Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 8:19 AM

Subject: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

CAUTION: This is an external email originated from outside of the St Lucy's School domain. Do not click links or open attachments or reply with sensitive information if you do not recognise the sender.

To Whom it may concern,

We are a family whose child has been attending St Lucy's since commencing kindergarten in 2015. From day one we have understood this is more than just a Special Needs School; this is a community. A community that together has rallied to the enjoy the good times and success of the students and staff as well as coming together to support each other when there has been very sad times.

When we joined St Lucy's it was a K-6 school. The day we were advised it would then become a K-12 school when our child was in year 4 was like being told we had won the lottery. At that point in our lives we were looking to relocate interstate as we could not see the right fit for our child in NSW for high school.

Our child's needs are very complex and he requires a very high level of support in which he receives each day whilst at St Lucy's. For him to be attending a support class in a main stream environment would not be ideal for him unless he had 1:1 support each day. When we did look into this before he started kindergarten we were advised by the local state school representative that this was not an option for him. We were unable to have a tour of our local state school to meet the principle or to have a look at the class environment. This raised alarm bells for us with regard to transparency and did not want this going forward throughout our son's schooling.

From day one we have been welcomed at St Lucy's, we are a part of something bigger than just a special needs school. Our son is so well supported and has become the best version of himself because of the amazing learning support and opportunities he receives each year. We firmly believe there is a place in our community for Special Needs Schools to exist, we are very grateful that we had the option to enrol our son at St Lucy's and that we did not need to rely on a system that he would not have been able to access the appropriate support in.

We hope the committee keep an open mind when deciding the outcome of the Federal Disability Royal Commission to phase out special needs schools and that they understand this is not a black and white decision. We are living proof of the success and importance of being involved with the special needs school at St Lucy's.

Kind Regards

Julie & Damian Hiser

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

**From:** Liz Huband**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 6:21 PM**Subject:** Fwd: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

We couldn't be happier with our experience at St Lucy's School these past 3 years. Our son has Phelan-McDermid Syndrome (moderate to severe intellectual disability, ASD level 3, non verbal). From the first orientation, our son was welcomed with open arms and as parents we took immense comfort that we had found 'our tribe' and our place among this caring community. The teachers, staff and volunteers provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment where the children can grow and thrive. The teaching staff and aides are highly skilled and provide a specialised learning experience tailored to my son's unique needs. They see beyond his disability, and help his strengths shine through every day. I shudder to think how our lives would be adversely impacted if our son was forced to attend a mainstream school. I implore you, please do not take away this choice from our families.

Liz Huband

My son, [redacted] previously attended mainstream preschool. The staff there worked hard to cater for [redacted] intellectual disability, non-verbal communication needs and physical disabilities. Despite attempts to include [redacted] he was usually unable to participate in most preschool activities. Activities and outings in the mainstream setting seemed designed for the mainstream majority.

[redacted] has now transitioned to primary school. Our family had the option to choose between the mainstream education setting or a special needs education setting. At our chosen special needs school, class sizes are smaller, teacher-to-student ratios are higher, and there is provision of a more individualised and supported environment. We believe that, as a result of this, there has been an increase in [redacted] participation in school activities and learning tasks. Learning tasks and activities have been individually modified, so that for [redacted] spoken speech was not required to complete tasks, thus reducing [redacted] anxiety, and therefore increasing his participation at school. The method in which lessons are presented are modified for student needs- such as the use of Key Word Signing during class. This has allowed [redacted] to have a clearer understanding of his lessons, and it better caters to his communication difficulties and intellectual disability.

Our family believe that the special needs education school has been able to provide a setting, better suited to [redacted] needs, and has allowed for increased participation and learning. As a result, [redacted] is slowly achieving some social, numeracy and literacy goals- including learning to read and write.

Our family believe that special needs schools continue to remain an important part of the education system. It continues to play a role in educating many students, including our son [redacted].

[redacted] happiness, wellbeing and ability to participate in his education has increased since being in a special education setting. We were grateful to have the variety of educational options to choose from. We were grateful to be able to make choices between schools based on individual needs, and on what we felt would help [redacted] participate and contribute more fully at school, and eventually as a member of society.

Written by Elaine ([redacted] Mum) on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024

**Subject:**

FW: advocating for special needs schools



**From:** Nadine Lipworth

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 2, 2024 9:00 AM

**Subject:** advocating for special needs schools

Dear Federal Disability Royal Commission,

I am writing to advocate for the critical need for special schools designed to support children like who are profoundly disabled. These schools provide tailored education and therapies that address the unique physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of such students. Unlike mainstream schools, special schools have specialized staff, adapted facilities, and individualized programs that create a nurturing and effective learning environment. This ensures that children like receive the appropriate care and education necessary for their development, well-being, and inclusion in society. Without these dedicated institutions, many profoundly disabled children would be unable to reach their full potential or receive the comprehensive support they need.

Kind Regards

Nadine Lipworth

**Subject:**

FW: Support for SSP's



**From:** Maree MacDermid

**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 1:51 PM

**Subject:** Support for SSP's

I writing in support of maintaining schools for specific purpose. My son has attended St Lucy's, an SSP, since 2013.

He was due to start school a year earlier, but could not get a school placement anywhere in Sydney at the time. needs were considered too challenging for a regular school or a support unit and the SSP's were full.


A year later we received a lifechanging letter from St Lucy's to say had a place at the school. This little school, doing incredible things every day, has given him the most rich and wonderful school experience. St Lucy's have shaped teaching around each child's learning needs with incredible skill, enthusiasm and I am thrilled to say, success. I know that would not understand, be overwhelmed and learn very little in a mainstream classroom. It also concerns me that in the whole history of formal education, bullying has not been successfully eradicated. with his unpredictable behaviour, mostly incomprehensible loud vocalisations, incontinence and sensory impairments (hearing and vision) would be a prime target. Whilst I understand the commissioner's concerns about equity in education, removing the option of an SSP only makes the playing field for children with disabilities LESS equal.

With due respect to the commissioners, saying we need to teach children without disability more tolerance by including children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms may be wonderful for some, but would not be suitable for many. The quality of my son's education should not be sacrificed in order to educate other children who have not been taught, for whatever reason, acceptance and tolerance of those with difference. It strikes me that the decision to start defunding SSP's was recommended by persons with physical disabilities. Just as an able bodied person cannot be the voice of someone who is physically impaired, a person who is completely cognitively unimpaired cannot speak for those who are challenged intellectually, emotionally, and sensorily.

I implore you to reconsider the case for defunding SSP's. It will not effect our family, we will have finished school. But I have seen the extraordinary impact specialised education has made for and his schoolmates. It would be a tragedy to close the door of quality and meaningful education on children with disabilities.

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

**From:** Lesley Maloney**Sent:** Tuesday, July 2, 2024 8:14 AM**Subject:** Fwd: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

Please find below our submission for the royal commission in regards to education experience at St Lucy's.

Our son's education experience in his special needs school (St Lucy's Wahroonga) has been incredibly satisfying and profoundly important for his overall happiness and development. The dedicated and compassionate staff create a nurturing environment tailored to his unique needs, ensuring he receives the individualised attention and support crucial for his growth. The specialised programmes and therapies offered at the school not only enhance his learning but also foster his social and emotional well-being. Seeing him thrive in an inclusive and understanding setting fills our family with immense joy and gratitude, knowing that he is not only learning but also building confidence and forming meaningful relationships. The importance of this educational experience cannot be overstated, as it lays a solid foundation for his future, equipping him with the skills and self-assurance needed to navigate the world to his best possible ability.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,  
Lesley Maloney

**Subject:**

FW: Special Needs Schools and Settings.



**From:** McLeod Sibusiso Mdunge

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 2, 2024 11:10 AM

**Subject:** Special Needs Schools and Settings.

First of all i need to say a big thank you to St Lucy Wahroonga for providing such a great platform for our kids to further develop their educational needs specifically with different challenges they currently have. Ever since I enrolled my son at St Lucy, i can see massive improvement in every aspect and this being to tge tremendous efforts by the dedicated staff and it is something that totally differentiate St Lucy from the main stream school that my son was previously enrolled in. I used to get calls on a daily basis with the challenges faced by educators as they didn't have the resources and skills possessed by the staff at St Lucy. I therefore plead with the department not to scrap the Special needs schools in the country as most kids will find it difficult to transform into a main school. My boy didn't like to go to school before but now with the settings at St Lucy's he is enjoying and so much improvements in his counting, speech and behavior. Lastly I just want to say a big thumbs up to the staff and may they continue with such great work with the school being like a second home to my son where he managed to make friends and not feel isolated as before in a mainstream school.

Thank you & regards.

McLeod Sibusiso Mdunge



**Subject:**

FW: Paragraph for the Lobby to keep special schools

**From:** Sarah Morrisey

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 2, 2024 10:29 PM

**Subject:** Paragraph for the Lobby to keep special schools



Hi Patricia,

Please see below paragraph:

My daughter has been at St Lucy's School since kindergarten and she is now in the equivalent of year 6 - her last year of primary school. She has a significant disability but St Lucy's has and continues to grow her self-confidence. She loves to go to school every day, she loves her teachers and her cohort and they are a big part of her identity.

While children with significant disabilities share a lot of the same school needs as their typically developing peers. The need to feel supported, to be challenged, to belong, to identify with their peers and most importantly to be educated. Our children also need adjustments. They need adjustments to the way that they're taught, the way that their classrooms are set up, the way the playground is secured. They need these adjustments for their wellbeing, their safety, to be able to develop and most importantly to allow them to learn. As parents, we want the best for our children. If your child is academic, there is a selective school on offer. If your child is sporty, you send them to the sports school, if your child is interested in the Arts, they go to a performing arts school. These are all schools offered by the Department of Education. The need for these schools, has been identified, in order for those children to succeed. Why, when my child has a significant disability and needs explicit teaching and adjustments, in order for her to reach her full potential, wouldn't I send her to the special school specifically designed for that purpose?

Many Thanks.

Kind Regards,

Sarah Morrisey



**Subject:**

FW: Submission - Our Education Experience at St Lucy's Satellite Class

-----Original Message-----

From: Rosa Mrvica

Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2024 11:38 AM

Subject: Submission - Our Education Experience at St Lucy's Satellite Class

CAUTION: This is an external email originated from outside of the St Lucy's School domain. Do not click links or open attachments or reply with sensitive information if you do not recognise the sender.

To Whom It May Concern

My son \_\_\_\_\_ was diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay and then later Autism Level 2. From our paediatrician, my understanding was that he had areas of development which were delayed compared to the "normal" child. This was clearly evident with his delayed speech - started to talk at age 3 and he was in nappies til the age of 6. These are just two examples.

Currently he is in a St Lucy's satellite class because he meets the criteria set out by the school to be there - you're not there because you want to be there, you're there to get all the support and assistance from specialised teachers and staff who are not only qualified but have the years of experience teaching these special needs children.

\_\_\_\_\_ is learning well in the satellite setting albeit his teacher tells me he's still at grade 1 level, even through he's currently in grade 2. The class sizes are small ie 9 students with a teacher and a teacher's aide. This allows the teaching staff to take the time with each child so that they can learn properly - this is essential in my opinion.

\_\_\_\_\_ started in Kindy with St Lucy's and they were able to manage his behaviour EXTREMELY well. Now, most of the time I hear from his teacher how well he's doing - he's playing with his peers (at age 8), whereas previously he wasn't at all or was doing parallel play - so this is also a late development socially.

I cannot fathom how the powers that be would even consider dismantling this type of education structure for special needs children and those with a disability. To integrate these children into a mainstream class early would be a disaster. They WILL be left behind, not only academically, but emotionally and socially too.

It is impossible for parents to spend their time at home teaching children when we're not qualified teachers. There aren't the hours in the day for parents to work, do home duties and then add this issue to their busy lives.

St Lucy's is a wonderful school for the children that need it and they absolutely deserve such a school. To short change them over the course of the schooling years - the whole of society will have to deal with the fallout of the consequences to such changes. Please keep St Lucy's school as it is under Mr David Raphael and other special education schools in the State of NSW.

Yours sincerely

Rosa Mrvica

**Subject:**

FW: Our experience at St Lucy's

**From:** Andrew Shepherd

**Sent:** Friday, June 21, 2024 4:47 PM

**To:** Patricia McCarthy

**Subject:** Our experience at St Lucy's



I would really like to contribute. I think schools like St Lucy's are vital to the education of special needs kids with intellectual disabilities and the wellbeing of their families:

"We found St Lucy's when our daughter was age 6. Diagnosed with level 3 autism and a severe intellectual disability her needs were and are extremely high, but St Lucy's provided the perfect environment for these needs to be met, particularly with their creative stream catering to love of music. I don't believe could have received this level of support from a mainstream integrated school nor the support St Lucy's has given my family. In fact, the school has supported us through some extremely hard times and I may not even be here be now to talk about it without it. "

I hope this helps.

Kind regards,

Andrew



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**Subject:**

FW: NSW response to the Disability Royal Commission

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**From:** Sue Shepherd

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 3, 2024 10:43 AM

**Subject:** NSW response to the Disability Royal Commission

Our fourteen year old daughter, [redacted] was diagnosed with autism when she was two. Both pre-diagnosis, in the knowledge that her social development was not meeting usual milestones and post-diagnosis when she became eligible for financial assistance, we did everything we could to access early intervention services for [redacted]. We hoped that, by school age, she would make adequate progress to access mainstream education and the kind of social opportunities most families take for granted.

Unfortunately [redacted] also experiences severe intellectual disability and difficulty self-regulating in a way that would not allow her to participate in and benefit from a mainstream school setting. While I believe it's important for schools to support diversity and that this can be beneficial for both neurotypical and neurodiverse children, I know my daughter's needs are too high to be accommodated in such a setting. To put this into perspective, I would desperately have loved to send [redacted] along to her neighbourhood school with her local peers. The reality is, however, that she could not function in such an environment; her needs are too high, she would be distressed, her behaviour is inappropriate and would be a distraction to teachers and other students.

Sending [redacted] to a special needs school is not a decision we made lightly. We know, however, that [redacted] is in an environment she can participate in and benefit from at St Lucy's. When we send her to school we are confident she has the support and attention she needs and she is happy to go each day. I have no doubt that many children with less severe ASD, given the right support and funding, can benefit from being a part of mainstream school settings. But for the approximately 38% of children with level 3 ASD who also have moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, as well as children with other serious disabilities requiring very specific care, mainstream school environments could be extremely detrimental. Special needs schools such as St Lucy's provide a very necessary role in the development and care of children like

**Subject:**

FW: Submission



**From:** Kim Wong-See

**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 7:52 PM

**Subject:** Submission

As \_\_\_\_\_ requires a high level of daily care and support, \_\_\_\_\_ greatly benefits from a specialized school that can offer a safe and nurturing environment that facilitates the development of an individualised plan while offering a place in which \_\_\_\_\_ feels supported and comfortable. St Lucy's have worked hard to promote his development, to support his wellbeing and accommodate his needs. At St Lucy's the teachers, staff and facilities are outstanding with each aspect of the school being meticulously thought through with the children's special needs at the center. We strongly believe that the mainstream schooling system is, and will always be, ill-equipped to support the development and needs of kids with disabilities, while also focusing on the different teaching requirements and needs for fully able children.

Kind regards

Kim & Ryan Wong-See

**Subject:**

FW: Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

**From:** Carlos Yunes**Sent:** Monday, July 1, 2024 11:05 PM**Subject:** Submission in response to Federal Disability Royal Commission recommendation to phase out Special Needs Schools and Settings

"Our experience with St Lucy's School and our son has been truly exceptional, marked by a supportive and nurturing environment that has greatly contributed to his development. The school's dedication to providing specialized education tailored to the needs of students with disabilities is evident in the remarkable progress has made. The personalized attention, compassionate staff, and inclusive community have created a safe and encouraging space for him to thrive. We firmly believe that the unique services and programs offered at St Lucy's are invaluable, not only for individual students like but for the broader community. Expanding and retaining the offerings at St Lucy's will ensure that more families can benefit from such a transformative educational experience, highlighting the public good served by maintaining and enhancing this special school setting."

Cheers!

Carlos Yunes Abreu