

School Can't Australia

Media Release

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School can't report needs to be followed by action

School Can't Australia has welcomed a Senate [report into school can't](#) and now urges governments across the country to begin the work of implementing the report's recommendations.

[School Can't Australia's formal response to the report](#)

Comments attributable to Tiffany Westphal, coordinator of School Can't Australia:

"For many years, school attendance difficulties have been attributed to poor parenting or student mental health. Intervention has focussed on parent training and the child's avoidant behaviour.

"But it is School Can't Australia's lived experience that school can't is a stress response, not a misbehaviour.

"Stressors are experienced within many contexts including schools, families, lived and natural environments, natural disasters, communities and experiences of discrimination. We need to identify the stressors that are impacting students and reduce exposure to them.

"Prioritising student well-being starts with prioritising teacher well-being. That means we need to resource and equip schools to respond to school can't in ways that prioritise well-being and encourage collaboration with students and their families.

"Our research indicates that students with a disability are vastly overrepresented in the population of school can't students. Nearly three-quarters of respondents to our survey of parents and carers indicated their school can't child had a disability. Another 10% suspected a disability that had not yet been diagnosed.

"Our students need schools that are inclusive and value diversity, rather than treating difference as a problem to be eliminated. And they need schools that are equipped and prepared to welcome them as they are, instead of demanding that they change to fit in.

"Our community also needs easier access to alternate forms of education, such as home education, distance education and flexible learning environments.

"Submissions to the Senate inquiry demonstrated that school can't is a significant issue that is impacting many families. Our parent peer support group has over 9000 members with 1600 waiting to join. We have been doubling in size every year.

“School Can’t Australia echos the call for urgent funding for our parent peer support service. There is currently in excess of a 4 month wait for parents/carers to join the group and receive support. Funding would enable us to extend support to more parents and carers, employ Mental Health Peer Support workers to run face-to-face groups, and to share information about our lived experience on a website.

“Families in our community report significant stress accessing appropriate supports for their children and themselves. It affects their physical health, mental health and financial well-being.

“This report is only the beginning. There are thousands of parents across the country who expect governments at all levels to get to work on ensuring that schools are safe and welcoming for every child, and School Can’t Australia won’t rest until that happens.

“We thank the Senate for the opportunity to share our community’s lived experience, and we thank the many brave parents for sharing their stories.”

School Can’t Australia’s submission to the Senate Inquiry: [here](#)

School Can’t Australia can be contacted by email for further comment:
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