

School Can't Australia

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PRESS RELEASE:

Friday, 12 April 2024

School Can't Australia Ltd responds to The Australian Government's response to the Senate Inquiry into School Refusal and related matters

Ms Rogers: "School Can't Australia Ltd is glad that The Australian Government acknowledges the benefits of parent/carer peer support and the need to fund it, however, our need is urgent! We currently support close to 11,500 families and receive over 20 applications to join School Can't Australia's parent/carer peer support community every day. School Can't Australia is run by lived experience volunteers, all of whom care deeply about the education and wellbeing of our children and young people".

Ms Westphal: "The failure to prioritise immediate funding for School Can't Australia Ltd, leaves families unsupported, children and young people at risk, and our volunteers under considerable pressure. We are a not-for-profit organisation. We require funding to cover operational expenses and to create educational resources. We have resorted to crowdfunding, while we wait for a formal funding agreement from government."

Ms Westphal: "School Can't Australia welcomes the opportunity to share our lived experience expertise, to provide: professional development, co-design, consultancy, and assistance developing resources. It is disappointing to hear that AERO has already commenced work on this issue but has not yet approached School Can't Australia. School Can't Australia calls on all organisations tasked with responding, to engage with us, to avoid creating responses that continue to miss the mark."

Ms Rogers: "School Can't Australia's lived experience expertise shows that mental health difficulties are a **symptom** of whatever is causing the school attendance difficulties. We must look upstream of the mental health difficulties to identify and address the stressors and barriers to attendance which are making it hard for our children and young people to attend school. It's our experience that chronic stress depletes our children's capacity to attend school and is making them mentally unwell."

Ms Westphal: "In my role as a social worker it is not unusual for students to identify between 30 – 50 stressors impacting them at school. When you look at their distress about school through a stress lens you realise that these students are just surviving. There are real reasons why they are not thriving at school".

Ms Rogers: "School Can't Australia's December 2022 research indicates that stress experienced in the context of school is a major contributor to school attendance difficulties. Research efforts need to be directed towards identifying and addressing stressors and barriers to attendance."

Ms Westphal: “As the peak body in Australia representing parents/carers and their children School Can't Australia calls on the organisations listed in the government response to collaborate with us, to engage in developing shared understandings, to co-design resources, training, and supports”.

Tiffany Westphal and Louise Rogers are board members of School Can't Australia Ltd and are co-ordinators of School Can't Australia's parent peer support group.

Links:

The Australian Government's response to the Senate Inquiry into School Refusal:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Tabled_Documents/5631

School Can't Australia's Web address: www.schoolcantaustralia.com.au

Email: schoolcantaustralia@gmail.com

Facebook page for parents and carers:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/schoolphobiaschoolrefusalaustralia>

Our Go Fund me: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-school-cant-australia>

More information please email or phone Tiffany Westphal on 0409808237