



The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Subject: **Girl with autism handcuffed by police**

The story below, from <https://a4.org.au/node/2268> or [9News](#), describes unacceptable events. This outrageous treatment of autistic students cannot continue.

There are numerous similar reports for other autistic children.

What steps have you taken or are you taking to:

1. train clinicians to support autistic Australians;
2. ensure autistic children, especially those with comorbid mental illness, get the supports they need as soon as they need them;
3. ensure clinicians providing behavioural support for autistic Australians are registered professionals; and
4. protect police from needing to abuse and traumatise autistic Australians (as is the inevitable outcome of the story below)?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'R Buckley'.

Bob Buckley
Convenor

29/10/2020

Cc: Ms Gladys Berejiklian, Premier of NSW
Senator Ms H. Hughes, Chair, Senate Select Committee on Autism

Girl with autism handcuffed by police after meltdown at school is 'falling through the cracks'



[Georgie Gardner](#)

Young children are being handcuffed, strapped down in hospital beds and knocked out with powerful sedatives, as autism advocates cry out for better mental health support services in NSW.

Confronting video recorded earlier this week and given to 9News shows a nine-year-old girl from south-west [Sydney](#) screaming as she is handcuffed and led away by police officers, following a meltdown at school.

Families and support workers say children with challenging behaviours and complex needs are falling through the cracks because of a lack of mental health and inpatient services for their age group, instead cycling through emergency departments and apprehensions by police.



Mum Megan and her daughter Makayla spoke to Georgie Gardner. (9News)

Among them is Makayla, a bright nine-year-old girl who craves friendship and normality but struggles with a combination of conditions including autism spectrum disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, ADHD and anxiety that result in uncontrolled and sometimes violent outbursts.

"I just want to be a normal family," Makayla told 9News. "I want to make mummy proud."

Instead she lives in fear of a voice in her head and the fallout from her own meltdowns.

Makayla has on numerous occasions been handcuffed and put into paddy wagons, sectioned under the Mental Health Act, restrained in emergency departments and been suspended from school.

Her mother Megan, who has been attacked by her daughter during outbursts, said Makayla needs more specialist help but that medical staff have admitted she is a child who has "fallen through the cracks" of the system.



Megan is often injured during Makayla's outbursts. (9News)



Georgie Gardner and Makayla at her home in Sydney. (9News)

"We're just being stonewalled everywhere we go," she said.

Megan stressed that she doesn't lay any blame at police, health workers, carers, school or emergency staff who respond to incidents – rather that the system is failing to provide much-needed specialist interventions, treatment and support for children like Makayla.

Grace Fava, CEO of the Autism Advisory and Support Service, operates the country's only 24-hour hotline for struggling parents and carers of kids with autism.

She said there are lots of parents in a similar situation as Megan, with families torn apart, unable to cope and isolated.

"For every one that comes through to us, there are at least another 100 that are crying out begging for help," she said.



Makayla is often heavily medicated when she is hospitalised. (9News)



Grace Fava, CEO of the Autism Advisory and Support Service. (9News)

"The system is letting them down. I'd say the system is broken but as somebody once eloquently put it, there is no system."

She said these children often end up in teen or adult mental health services, where they may be exposed to drugs, self-harm and inappropriate behaviour.

They are also at a higher risk of turning to drugs and ending up in the justice system when they get older.

With responsibility for services falling under a combination of state and federal government agencies, there's little accountability.

from <https://www.9news.com.au/national/nine-y...>