

**EXECUTIVE**

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**Our ref** MIN2016/83

Mr Bob Buckley  
A4 Convenor  
Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia  
convenor@a4.org.au

17 February 2016

Dear Mr Buckley

**Re: Autism Spectrum Disorder and bullying**

Thank you for your email of 29 January 2016 to the Hon Peter Chandler, Minister for Education, regarding the issue of bullying of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I am replying on the minister's behalf.

The Department of Education recognises that bullying of any student is a serious issue. The department also recognises the potential effects of bullying on the educational outcomes and wellbeing of students with ASD, as outlined in your recent submission to the review into the Program for Students with Disability in Victoria.

The Department of Education provides support and a number of initiatives and programs to school communities to address the bullying of students with ASD.

Northern Territory Government schools are supported to participate in the *Bullying, No Way!* initiative, including the *National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence* to create learning environments where every student and school community member is safe, supported, respected and valued. Sixty Northern Territory schools actively engaged in this initiative in 2015.

In 2016, the Student Voice Working Group will make a presentation to Department of Education executives regarding their issues and concerns about bullying. The working group was established as part of the *National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence*. The students share and implement ideas and insights into what schools and students can do to prevent and reduce bullying behaviours.

The *Disability Standards for Education* is strongly promoted within the Department of Education to ensure that schools and teachers are aware of their obligations and the rights of students, including the elimination of harassment and victimisation. The department provides online training for all school staff to further develop an understanding of the *Disability Standards for Education*.

In addition the Department of Education promotes awareness and understanding of ASD within school communities through a number of professional learning courses. The Positive Partnerships program for educators and parents and the online training, *Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders* course, are facilitated by the department so that education staff can further develop their awareness of ASD and how to support students with ASD.

The Department of Education routinely monitors the number of schools and school staff who participate in the aforementioned programs and initiatives. The department continues to work towards reducing and ultimately eliminating bullying experienced by all students, including students with ASD.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for the ASD community and the serious issue of bullying of students with ASD.

If you would like to discuss any of these initiatives, please contact Ms Kath Midgley, Acting Director Student Support at email [kath.midgley@nt.gov.au](mailto:kath.midgley@nt.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Ken Davies**  
Chief Executive