



# SHANE RATTENBURY MLA

Minister for Education  
Minister for Corrections  
Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs  
Minister for Road Safety

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Member for Molonglo

Mr Bob Buckley  
convenor@a4.org.au

Dear Mr Buckley

Bob

Thank you for your email of 29 January 2016 regarding autistic students in schools. I take the issue of bullying in schools very seriously and appreciate the time you have taken to provide information on students with autism specifically.

The Education Directorate recognises students who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may encounter many challenges in the school environment and may require additional supports and resources. As you are aware, ACT public schools strive to provide inclusive environments where the needs of all students are considered, particularly those with special needs.

Whole school student pastoral care programs take a personalised approach to supporting student well-being. Students in ACT public schools have access to qualified school psychologists and social workers and additionally for high school students, pastoral care and youth support workers. Disability Education Coordinators are located in each school and there are 21 Pastoral Care Coordinators, one in every high school. These staff are able to provide support to victims and perpetrators of bullying. In addition Network Student Engagement Teams provide multidisciplinary supports to schools within their network and professional learning targeted at supporting students with ASD is available as both online and directly for teachers and learning support staff.

ACT public schools use a variety of data tools to monitor the wellbeing of students. The school satisfaction survey occurs yearly and includes input from staff, students and families. Under the *Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools (2007)* policy, schools also record instances of bullying, harassment and violence that pose an immediate threat to the safety of students and staff. This information can be used to provide specific and additional supports in schools where bullying is identified as an issue.

Thank you for raising this important issue. I believe the safety and wellbeing of students,

**ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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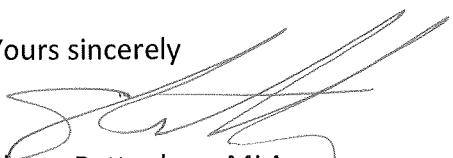


@ShaneRattenbury

shanerattenburymla

including those with ASD, is a significant and ongoing area of focus for ACT public schools.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Rattenbury', written over the printed name.

Shane Rattenbury MLA  
Minister for Education