



The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Education

1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002
Telephone: +613 9651 1222

COR 15308

Mr Bob Buckley
convenor@a4.org.au

Dear Mr Buckley

Thank you for your email concerning bullying of children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I agree that all students should feel safe when they are at school.

The Andrews Labor Government made a commitment to establish Victoria as the Education State where every Victorian has an equal right to the knowledge and skills to help shape their lives. Part of this work is to promote inclusive practices in schools so they can better support all children and young people, including those with disabilities and special needs. The Special Needs Plan for Victorian Schools is part of this vision because every child deserves a great education to reach their full potential, especially those with special needs who may already face additional challenges in their lives.

As part of the Special Needs Plan, the Victorian Government committed to reviewing the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD), with a particular focus on the needs of children and young people with an ASD and the needs of children with disabilities in the transition from primary to secondary schooling. The Review included face-to-face consultations with peak industry bodies, principal and teacher associations, disability advocates and unions, led by Australia's former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Graeme Innes. A public consultation process seeking online contributions was also conducted.

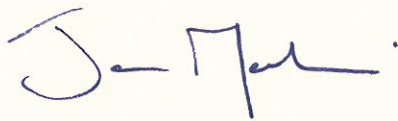
The Government takes the issues of student safety and wellbeing very seriously and every effort is made to ensure that Victorian schools are providing safe and supportive environments for all children and young people. Victorian government schools do not tolerate any form of bullying, whether it is physical, verbal or online. All Victorian schools are required to develop and implement a bullying and cyberbullying prevention policy in collaboration with their school communities.

There are also a number of strategies in place specifically designed to support the social engagement and participation of children and young people with an ASD, including a contract with Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia) to provide training to teachers from across the State to deliver peer education sessions.

I have asked Ms Carol Kelly, Executive Director, Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division, Early Childhood and School Education Group, Department of Education and Training to respond to you directly regarding the specific issues you have raised.

If you would like further information about supports for children and young people with an ASD in Victorian government schools, please contact Mr Mark Tainsh, Director, Inclusion, Access and participation, Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division, Early childhood, School Education Group, Department of Education and Training, on 9637 3844 or by email: tainsh.mark.t@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Merlino'.

23.2.16

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