



9 October, 2020

JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT'S NEW STUDENT BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

Parents, teachers and principals have always maintained a commitment to the highest standards of educational achievement for all students across all settings throughout the NSW public school system.

This requires the NSW Government and Department of Education to adequately ensure the staffing, curriculum, support programs and infrastructure requirements of the system are provided so that all schools have the resources to meet the needs of every child.

The rushed implementation of the Department's new Student Behaviour Strategy (to replace the suspension and expulsion policy) comes at a time when schools are under-resourced, lack support from the system and are withstanding immense pressure during this enduring COVID-19 pandemic.

This is a time when the Department should be examining the provision of public schooling across the system, from preschool to Year 12, identifying strengths and addressing areas of need.

By avoiding this responsibility, the new Student Behaviour Strategy will look like a thinly veiled exercise in data suppression and blame shifting. It portrays schools as the point of failure when suspensions are issued.

Schools use the suspension and expulsion policy as a last resort after all available options and resources have been exhausted, having implemented a range of strategies and engaged parents, carers and external agencies, necessary to maintain the safety and wellbeing of all.

The NSW Government and Department of Education must build the resources of the NSW public school system to meet the social, learning, health and behaviour needs of our students.

The absence of such resources ultimately permits unaddressed student need to manifest in unacceptable behaviours.

We therefore call on the NSW Government and Department of Education to:

- provide adequate public pre-schooling, early intervention programs and support for parents and carers
- provide additional school counsellors and other specialist staffing, support programs, therapeutic services, professional development, smaller class sizes and appropriate settings to assist schools in meeting the needs of all students
- ensure the health and safety of all students and staff
- commit additional funding, resources and support to the implementation of the policy changes, which would enable schools to consult, plan, develop and deal with complex case management in pursuit of the highest standard of student behaviour
- conduct genuine consultation with stakeholders in regard to the new behaviour policy including the suspension and expulsion procedures
- develop effective whole of government processes to allow government agencies to work collaboratively to support students with the most complex needs.

Tim Spencer
President
Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales

Phil Seymour
President
NSW Primary Principals' Association

Craig Petersen
President
NSW Secondary Principals' Council

Angelo Gavrielatos
President
NSW Teachers Federation