



Children and Young People  
with Disability Australia

## Media Release

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# Almost half of students with disability denied key school supports during pandemic: New research reveals

**Damning new research has revealed that Australian students with disability have again been unfairly left behind by Australia's education system during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) today launched the results of a national survey of more than 700 parents and carers of students with disability.

The report, ***Not even remotely fair: Experiences of students with disability during COVID-19***, shows 61% of respondents said they had received inadequate support so they could be included in education during remote learning.

More than half said students with disability during the remote learning period:

- Did not have regular contact with their school to ensure the learning was accessible.
- Received learning materials from their school that were inaccessible.
- Were not adequately supported in their education.

Of most concern was the complete withdrawal of vital supports to enable students to participate in education on an equal basis to their non-disabled peers including:

- 72% of students felt more socially isolated from their classmates (e.g. being excluded from working with their peers, not invited to Zoom/virtual classroom sessions). This is crucially important for inclusion in education.
- 44% of students lost access to learning support staff such as aides, or had support hours dramatically reduced.
- 38% of students lost access to supervision in their education
- 30% of students experienced reduced access to education equipment that helps them learn (e.g. particular technologies, furniture).

The pandemic was also having a significant impact on mental health: just over half said either they or their student had suffered from poorer mental health due to remote learning.

Many families were also confused about how to use NDIS funding to support remote learning, with only 5% of respondents having had an NDIS plan review approved to secure additional educational supports for their student. Most families didn't know this was an option and had received no communication from the NDIS regarding education.

The survey found that when a school provided specific and tailored support to a student with disability, they fared much better during remote learning.

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The survey results have now formed the basis of a new research report, released today by CYDA together with the University of NSW (Canberra) and the University of Melbourne.

**Download the survey and research report here: *Not even remotely fair: Experiences of students with disability during COVID-19***

**Quotes attributable to Mary Sayers, CEO, Children and Young People with Disability Australia**

*“There is no doubt that COVID-19 has made school difficult for all students, but there is entrenched inequality in Australia’s school system which has made this situation so much tougher for students with disability and their families.*

*“That’s why it’s so important we continue our fight for a fair and inclusive education system where the learning needs of students with disability are not an afterthought, but a considered part of everyday teaching and learning at every single school in Australia.”*

**Quotes attributable to Professor Helen Dickinson, Public Service Research Group, UNSW, Canberra**

*“Children and young people with disability arguably faced an even more difficult time and greater impact to their education, not because of their impairments but as a result of the underlying social structures and systems that create discrimination. It is well evidenced that children and young people with disability have poorer education experiences due to a range of well-known structural inequities.”*

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