



Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia began in January 2018, evolving from exploratory conversations within Facebook ADHD support groups on the challenges of supporting young people with ADHD. It became clear that the shared struggles faced by families living with ADHD were having a huge emotional, financial and mental health impact, so a small group of passionate parents decided to form an advocacy group in order to shape better outcomes for their children. We are a voluntary DPO actively involved in big issues such as the NSW Student Behaviour Strategy. We attach a copy of the Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia Parent and Carer Survey for your information, further information regarding our initiatives can be found here: <https://parentsforadhdadvocacy.com.au/>

¹Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

Our submission aims to address the failure of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, Commonwealth and State governments to uphold the rights of children with ADHD within education. Since our voice represents children with ADHD in education, we have braided our responses to the questions posed within the Position Paper throughout our submission. As a DPO we stand strongly for optimal academic and social outcomes for children with ADHD. We advocate for evidence-based best practice and accountability in education.

²People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity–impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development

Australian education policy and practise demands increasingly standardised behavioural and curricula expectations. This standard 'ideal' is inherently misaligned with diversity; furthermore this 'ideal' is largely incompatible with ADHD clinical manifestations of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity. Children with ADHD are at serious risk of disadvantage in the classroom due to barriers consistent with the social model of disability. This bias within a standardised education system underpins systemic discrimination and oppression of many children with ADHD in schools.

³ 24% of school aged children with ADHD have been suspended, with an average of 3.7 suspensions per child, 30% of children with ADHD have experienced informal exclusions, 50% of parents reported difficulty in obtaining ADHD supports for their child, 30% of children changed schools due to ADHD related issues

⁴Australian longitudinal studies identified trajectories between academic achievement, engagement, and the development of emotional and conduct problems in children with ADHD. ⁵Australian common education policy and practice remain largely ignorant of the UNCRPD framework. The absence of inclusive education methodologies, Universal Design and informed community attitudes may contribute to extrinsic risk factors

¹ The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June. U, 1994

² American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition. Arlington, VA., American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

³Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia (2019)Parent & Carer Experiences of ADHD in Australian Schools: Critical Gaps

⁴ Zendarski N, Mensah F, Hiscock H, Sciberras E. Trajectories of Emotional and Conduct Problems and Their Association With Early High School Achievement and Engagement for Adolescents With ADHD. Journal of Attention Disorders. March 2019. doi:10.1177/1087054719833167

⁵ Linda J. Graham, Marijne Medhurst, Catia Malaquias, Haley Tancredi, Catriona de Bruin, Jenna Gillett-Swan, Shiralee Poed, Ilektra Spandagou, Suzanne Carrington & Kathy Cologon (2020) Beyond Salamanca: a citation analysis of the CRPD/GC4 relative to the Salamanca Statement in inclusive and special education research, International Journal of Inclusive Education, DOI: [10.1080/13603116.2020.1831627](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1831627)

involved in the etiology of co-existing conditions such as anxiety, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder for children with ADHD.

⁶ADHD affects approximately 281,200 children and adolescents (aged 0-19) and 533,300 adults (aged 20+) in Australia. The total cost of ADHD in Australia in 2019 is \$20.42 billion, which includes financial costs of \$12.83 billion and wellbeing losses of \$7.59 billion. Productivity losses due to ADHD are substantial (\$10.19 billion)

³Improving outcomes for children with ADHD is fraught with emotional and financial difficulties for parents and carers. However, the National Disability Scheme (NDIS) refutes the legitimacy of ADHD, thereby creating further barriers for families to access their right to ⁷live in the community with choices equal to others. ³Parents find themselves pressured by schools to seek alternative diagnoses for their children so schools may at least access funding. Additional diagnoses made with 'perverse intent' can further compound learning and life disadvantage for children, adding to poor self of sense and low expectations, increasing the risk of the development of psycho-social disorders and segregation. The new Strategy must uphold the fundamental role of inclusive education within an inclusive society to negate these abuses against children with ADHD.

⁸Personally, I would like more checks and measures in place in terms of school-based decision-making within the Education Act and a Principal's power to be able to do that. I believe that a Principal should have accountability to make decisions, but within constraint of the Education Act.

⁹So there are, absolutely, these processes can work, but we need everybody singing on 10 the same page, singing from the same song sheet, the same sorts of high-quality practices happening everywhere. It should not be, as someone said earlier this week, a lottery.

³Current accountability under the DDA, DSE and state equal opportunity laws are not fit for purpose; are inherently biased toward favourable outcomes for the education system, and ¹⁰present insurmountable, practical hurdles to the complainant. They repeatedly fail to protect students with ADHD and cause further trauma. Education cannot continue to be led by ideology. Pedagogy and practice must be research-led and evidence-based informed by the leading inclusion educational academics in Australia.

Entrenched systemic ableism of all children with disability must cease within the scope of our next National Disability Strategy. Mental health issues are the scourge of our children's generation. The overrepresentation of children and young people with disability within these mental health statistics is a tragedy the world should one day mourn.

Articles 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 provide the key human rights standards to expose violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and, in their most egregious form, torture and ill-treatment within the law, policy and practice frameworks of care, treatment and protection. Underpinned by ableism, these law, policy and practice frameworks have hidden individual, systemic and legal forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. This has meant that these experiences are sanitised, normalised and legitimised within the language of care, treatment and protection

⁵Deloitte Access Economics (2019) The social and economic costs of ADHD in Australia

⁷ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 19

⁸ Ms Sarah, (Parent of Kobe, 16) 14 October 2020 [Transcript Day 3 - Public hearing 7, Brisbane](#) Disability Royal Commission explores barriers to education

⁹ Professor Linda Graham 15 October 2020 [Transcript Day 4 - Public hearing 7, Brisbane](#) Disability Royal Commission explores barriers to education

¹⁰ Kayess, R., & Sands, T. (2020). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Shining a light on Social Transformation*. Sydney: UNSW Social Policy Research Centre.

