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**MEDIA RELEASE**

## National Survey: Discrimination against students with disability in schools is widespread

A national survey of students with disability has revealed that discrimination against children and young people with disability in our education system is rife. Students, families and teaching staff across Australia participated in the survey conducted by academics at the University of Melbourne, Macquarie University and Curtin University.

The results released publicly today reveal that more than 70% of students have experienced one or more instances of gatekeeping or restrictive practices in schools and education systems.

“Gatekeeping” refers to unofficial, either subtle or overt practices, that mainstream schools use to discourage initial and continued enrolment and inclusive participation of students with disability. “Restrictive Practices” refer to practices applied to students that have the effect of forcing them out of mainstream classrooms.

These practices occur across Government, Catholic and independent schools and in metropolitan, regional and remote areas and at about the same rates for students with disability, regardless of type of disability.

The 2016 Senate inquiry report into access and attainment of students with disability and the recent NSW inquiry on abuse in schools document that gatekeeping and restrictive practices are occurring in a range of settings and on a regular basis, however the extent of this discrimination against students with disability has shocked people with extensive experience in the field.

Dr Robert Jackson, Adjunct Associate Professor at Curtin University said: “It is quite alarming that many of the practices reported appear to be in direct contravention of the law, contrary to decades of research evidence and directly contrary to the stated values of many of the schools involved.”

The national study involved more than 700 students with disability, family members and advocates. More than 160 school staff also contributed to the research.

Stephanie Gotlib, CEO of Children and Young People with Disability Australia said:

“The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recently issued a General Comment setting out clear definitions of what constitutes inclusive

education and segregation and the need for all signatory States, including Australia, to set a clear path towards a fully inclusive education system,"

"The results show that the mainstream education system continues to resist the inclusion of students with disability. There is an urgent need to reform the education system and stop these exclusionary practices. Gatekeeping and restrictive practices hamper the long-term academic and social outcomes for students with disability," said Ms Gotlib.

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All Means All - The Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education is a nationwide multi-stakeholder alliance of people and organisations working together for the implementation of an inclusive education system. We aim to remove the legal, structural and attitudinal barriers that limit the rights of some students to access full inclusive education in regular classrooms in Australian schools.

A key part of our work is to report on important research on inclusive education and barriers to its implementation.

www.allmeansall.org.au

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative persons organisation for children and young people with disability aged 0 to 25 years. CYDA provides a link between the direct experiences of children and young people with disability and their families to federal government and other key stakeholders.

www.cyda.org.au

**REPORT**

The survey was conducted Dr Robert Jackson, Adjunct Associate Professor, Curtin University, Dr Shiralee Poed, Senior Lecturer in Learning Intervention at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne and Dr Kathy Cologon, Senior Lecturer in Inclusive Education at the Department of Educational Studies.

The publication is available in full here.

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