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## STATEMENT OF ALL MEANS ALL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS AUSTRALIA

4 December 2025

### **The Thriving Kids initiative must promote students' rights to inclusive education**

**All Means All** (AMA) and **Inclusive Educators Australia** (IEA), like many across the disability community, have been following the Thriving Kids Inquiry closely. We are deeply concerned by evidence provided by the Presidents of the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA) and Australian Special Education Principals Association (ASEPA).

Despite clear findings of the Disability Royal Commission about widespread gatekeeping and the need to legislate a right to enrol at a student's local school, APPA and AGPPA defended gatekeeping practices. The APPA representative stated that for some students their local school may not be "the best place for them". The AGPPA representative indicated that a local school "may not be the best place for a whole of reasons". These comments directly contradict the right of every student to enrol at their local school and reinforce attitudes that have long denied students with disability equal access to education.

These comments also demonstrate a limited understanding of inclusive education, including its human rights foundations and the need for systemic capability building for educators. Quality professional learning in inclusive education is not optional. It is an essential requirement for a contemporary education system. It is also inaccurate and troubling that the APPA representative appeared unaware that several Australian universities already offer post-graduate qualifications in inclusive education, as well as inclusive education modules within initial teacher education programs.

**Rhonda Galbally AC Patron of All Means All and Former Commission of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation said:**

*"Gatekeeping is discriminatory. It denies children their rights and entrenches segregation. Australia must act on the Royal Commission's recommendations and uphold every child's right to attend their neighbourhood school."*

ASEPA's assertion that special schools are "the most inclusive" is absurd. This position is incompatible with Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and with General Comment No. 4, which makes clear that special/segregated education is incompatible with inclusive education.

It is also deeply concerning that ASEPA sits on the Thriving Kids Advisory Group. As we understand the initiative, Thriving Kids is intended to support children with disability with low to moderate support needs. These children would not typically attend a special school, which raises important questions about the relevance and appropriateness of ASEPA's representation in this advisory role.

The Thriving Kids Inquiry must ensure its findings and recommendations align with Australia's international human rights obligations and support a progressive realisation of inclusive education for all students.

**Loren Swancutt, Chair of Inclusive Educators Australia, said:**

*"The Thriving Kids Inquiry is a chance to confront the assumptions that limit children's opportunities. Suggesting that some children are 'better off' outside their local school risks entrenching the very barriers the Inquiry is meant to examine. If we are serious about supporting children to thrive, the focus must be on removing barriers within existing schools and services, not directing children away from them."*

**Stephanie Gotlib, Executive Director - Government Relations of Advocacy, All Means All stated:**

*"It is out of date thinking to see segregation as acceptable and just wrong to say specialist schools are inclusive settings. The vision we should all be supporting, that is consistent with a contemporary understanding of disability, is that Thriving Kids will be a pathway to an inclusive life. A fundamental part of an inclusive life is an inclusive education."*

**ENDS**

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