



# Annual Report 2019/2020

**Presented at the AGM held on 31 March 2021 by Zoom**

Tēnā koutou katoa

2020 was certainly a year of challenge and change for us all. Where our lives were turned upside down as we adapted to new ways of working and connecting with each other and reassessed our priorities.

Importantly for the work of IEAG the COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption to education systems in history. Exacerbating pre-existing education disparities and reducing the opportunities for many children. In New Zealand disabled children faced a number of additional challenges, including; interruptions to usual routines and learning causing stress and anxiety, disruption to specialist services such as speech language therapists and psychologists important for their communication and social, emotional skills, and access to on-line learning being dependent on children's individual needs and their schools ability to provide tailored lessons resulting in many students missing out. As a result disabled students have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. School leaders have noted that the Coronavirus pandemic has made our education system even more unequal.

Disabled students and their families and whānau continue to face challenges in understanding, navigating and accessing their rights within the education system especially in light of the complexities and challenges created by the COVID19 pandemic. This means that in the year ahead our work is even more important than ever. As we continue to advocate for changes to the education system for the benefit of all young New Zealanders, and in particular disabled students, whose rights to inclusive education, reasonable accommodation and individualised supports need to be better understood and actively promoted.

## **2020 Annual General Meeting**

Due to the restrictions and uncertainty caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the Governing Committee resolved last year that the 2020 Annual General Meeting should be delayed. This decision was made in reliance on the provisions of the COVID-19 Response (Requirements For Entities-Modifications and Exemptions) Act 2020 (the Act). The Act allowed entities including, Incorporated Societies, to temporarily modify their rules including the calling and holding of meetings and the giving of information. We had hoped that by waiting until the new year we would be able to get together and reconnect with our members. But unfortunately the recent community outbreaks in Auckland has reminded us that meeting virtual will be part of our "new normal" for a while yet.



## **IEAG Governing Committee and Contractors**

The Governing Committee members for 2019/2020 were Trish Grant, Heather Lear, Giovanni Tiso, Antonia Hannah, Rebekah Corlett, and Barbara Perry. Heather Lear continued as the Convenor. During this period we continued to contact Imelda Coleman to provide administrative support. Antonia Hannah was engaged part-time as our Communications Officer.

As an organisation we rely heavily on the voluntary contributions of our governing Committee and I would like to thank the committee members for their contributions and continued support of IEAG. I have particularly valued the support I have been given as Convenor over the past eighteen months in what has been a personally challenging period. I would also like to extend my grateful thanks to Imelda Coleman for her ongoing administrative support which I have found invaluable in my role as Convenor.

IEAG's Rules were amended in 2017 to extend the term of the Governing Committee from one to three years. This was effective from the April 2018 AGM. This means the term of current committee members, elected in April 2018, will expire at the next AGM to be held later this year. We will be seeking nominations for new members at that time.

## **Education System Reform Participation and Stakeholder Representation**

2019/2020 was a busy year as the coalition government continued to progress and implement an extensive three year work programme of education system reforms. July 2019 saw the launch of the Learning Support Action Plan, followed by the Final Report of the Independent Taskforce on the review of Tomorrow's Schools, the Government's response to the Taskforces recommendations was released in November 2019 and the Education and Training Bill 2019 was introduced in December with oral submissions being heard just before and during lockdown.

IEAG has continued to work collaboratively and constructively with the Ministry of Education and stakeholders within the disability and education sectors on the education reforms. Our participation included;

- Being invited to attend the release of the Learning Support Action Plan at Green Bay High School on 26 July 2019.
- participating in the Ministry of Education Building on Success for All Forums in Wellington in September 2019 and March 2020.
- as a member of the Ministry of Education's Education Data Protection and Use Policy Working Group
- attending the Education's Education Data Protection and Use Policy Symposium on 10 March 2020



- as members of Education for All forum - a strategic planning meeting was held in April via Zoom and a face to face meeting was held in Wellington attended by governing committee members. We engaged with the Ministry of Education on the Learning Support Registers and on curriculum, progress and achievement.
- Providing written and oral submissions on the Education and Training Bill.
- participating in a focus group on the refresh of the Massey University Post Graduate Specialist Teaching Qualification Programme via Zoom.

### **Submissions - Education and Training Bill 2019**

IEAG submitted on the Education and Training Bill 2019 in February 2020. This Bill proposed the biggest education changes in decades and was promoted as being an important step towards improving success for all our learners. IEAG's written submission focused on the following key issues and omissions;

- the lack of an enforceable right to inclusive education,
- absence of a reference to New Zealand's International Treaty Obligations including UNCRC and UNCPD,
- the retention of the Secretary's power to direct special education enrolment,
- the renaming of special schools as specialist schools,
- concerns over the Dispute Resolution Process, and
- the updating of the Physical Restraint Framework.

In our oral submission to the Education and Workforce Committee in April via Zoom we spoke to three key issues

- the right to inclusive education, highlighting that this was a missed opportunity to strengthen the right to education by including within new education legislation an enforceable right to inclusive education in accordance with New Zealand's obligations under Article 24 UNCRPD and as recommended by the UNCRPD committee in 2014.
- Special education enrolment, noting that continuing the Secretary's power to direct a parent to enrol their child at a particular state school or specialist school was a breach of a disabled child's right to inclusive education. It is also discriminatory as it creates unequal treatment for disabled students and their parents. The parents of non-disabled students cannot be convicted of an offense for failing to enrol their child at a particular school or specialist school.
- changes to the use of physical restraint. We strongly oppose the change in language from "physical restraint" to "physical force", the change in framing from "restrictive to permissive," altering the threshold and widening the scope to include emotional distress.



## Voices Project

IEAG's ongoing work includes our unique Voices Project. IEAG's Voices Project aims to create systemic change within classrooms, schools and communities by positioning and profiling young disabled people as experts in their own lives and enabling their voices to be heard on all matters important to them, including education.

Phase One: IEAG's website was developed as a platform for IEAG's Voices Project and includes free to use evidence informed resources. These include downloadable lesson plans for educators.

- In the 12 months ending 30 June 2020 there were 9474 website page views with the Voices Culture and Identity, Everybody Belongs teaching plans and the Videos being the most popular pages visited.
- In the 12 months ending 30 March 2021 there were 9041 website page views with the Voices Culture and Identity, Everybody Belongs teaching plans, the Videos and Human Rights in Aotearoa being the most popular pages visited.

Phase two; The second phase of the project promotes communication as a fundamental human right and recognises that early language development is a key indicator of wellbeing. It recognises that supporting student communication is critical to belonging and pivotal to students being able to access, learn from, with and alongside others within the New Zealand Curriculum.

In September 2019 thanks to funding from a Lottery National Community Grant, IEAG contracted the University of Auckland to commence work in early 2020 on an update of the International Literature Review of Best Practices in Speech and Language Therapy commissioned by the Ministry of Education in 1998, 2001 and in 2005 is a critical first step. The results of this review are intending to provide an evidence base from which resources responding to and supporting the needs of young New Zealanders with speech, language and communication challenges will be developed (SLCN).

A draft Report "Developing Effective Inclusive Education Practices for Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs" has been completed for peer review. This Report updates the literature on current practices and includes a focus on inter-professional collaboration between Speech language professionals and educators to maximise the participation of students with SLCN and to support their communication skills and agency within the classroom.



## **Amplifying the voice of young disabled people**

In 2019 IEAG contributed to two significant academic conferences on inclusive education.

*Symposium for Inclusive Education, 18th - 19th July 2019, the University of Auckland*

The Symposium was an opportunity for education practitioners to access the most recent research and practice that describes effective and high quality inclusive education in both New Zealand and international schools.

IEAG's Voices Project was featured as a keynote presentation at the symposium. IEAG also helped to facilitate a panel discussion by five young disabled people for the Inclusive Education

Symposium. The Young Persons' Panel ensured disabled people had their voice heard at the conference.

*The Inclusive Education Summit (TIES), 25 - 27 October, the University of Auckland*

TIES is an annual international conference, which has in recent years been hosted in New Zealand and Australia. The summit provided another key opportunity for us to promote IEAG's Voices Project. Creating an inclusive education system as the foundation for building inclusive communities is at the heart of this work. IEAG's presentation profiled the films and resources currently available on our website, outlined what is proposed going forward and provided an opportunity for participants to input into the next phase of the project.

Once again IEAG helped to facilitate a panel presentation & discussion by five young disabled people. This time it was for the Inclusive Education Summit (TIES) held again at the Kohia Centre, University of Auckland, in October.

A generous \$3,000 professional development grant from the Todd Foundation for the 2019 calendar year enabled four Governing Committee members to attend the Summit in Auckland.

## **Financial Stewardship**

We have continued to engage All Accounted For as our accountants and to utilise XERO software for the financial management of IEAG's accounts. Our 5 year partnership funding from the Todd Foundation has finished with the last grant payment being received in February 2019. In 2019/2020 IEAG was successful in securing a multi-year Lottery National Community Grant of \$10,000 payable from March 2020 for 3 years. This our only income for the year, and although total assets as at year end were \$75,264, this has been identified as an area of focus for 2019/2020 as this will impact on the sustainability of IEAG as an organisation.



## **Acknowledgements for support given to IEAG 2019/2020**

Special thanks are extended to the Todd Foundation without the generous five year partnership funding and the grant for professional development we would not have achieved all we have this year.

We also wish to extend our thanks to organisations that have supported our work through grants, and to those people who have generously and voluntarily supported our work. We acknowledge with gratitude the funding received from these organisations:

- Todd Foundation
- Lotteries Community Grants Board

IEAG extends its thanks to the following people for their generous, support:

- Trish Grant and IHC for ongoing support
- Anne Marie McIlroy for presenting the Voices Project at the two inclusion conferences
- Dr Jude MacArthur for ADSA presentations Inclusive Education
- Antonia Hannah and Dr Bernadette McCartney for organising the youth panels at the two inclusion conferences

This support has been invaluable and is very much appreciated.

### **IEAG Convenor**

Heather Lear