

Inclusive Education in New South Wales, Australia

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New South Wales

- **Population:** 7.1 million; almost 1/3 of Australian population
- **Employment:** 3.4 million employed
 - higher unemployment rate (5.7%) than mining states Western Australia & Queensland;
- **Main industries:**
 - Health care and social assistance (11%)
 - Retail Trade (10.5%)
 - Manufacturing (8.8%)
- **GDP:** AUD \$382.2 billion
 - NSW accounts for 30.3% of national GDP
- **Diversity:** 26.5% born overseas
 - largest contributor is UK (17%),
 - followed by China (7%), NZ (7%) and Vietnam (4%);
- **NSW government expenditure on education:**
 - \$11.2 billion in 2009-10
 - includes TAFE and \$833.5 million on non-government schools (funded at 25% of cost of government school enrolments)

- **K-12 population: 1,112,169 students**
 - 32.1% of national enrolments
- **66.2% enrolled in NSW government schools**
 - remainder in non-government schools (Catholic & Independent) but limited data available from non-government sector.
- **Indigenous students account for 5.5% of government enrolments**
 - 13% in special schools, 11.6% in support classes, 22% of long suspensions
- **Students from a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE): 29.3%**
 - 24.9% special schools, 33.5% support classes (but this is complicated by the inclusion of students in Intensive English classes in the disability support class count)
- **Official stats on students with a disability in government schools (4.3%)**
 - Students with special educational needs (6.7%) but this has shifted over the years with classification changes
- **Funding for special education in 2010: AUD \$1.1 billion**



ARC DP1093020: Study Context & Research Problem

- **Competing stakeholder claims**
 - Parents reporting that their children are being *inadequately* supported in all settings, particularly in regular schools
 - Teachers union and principal groups arguing that:
 - Regular schools were buckling under the rise in 'integrated students'
 - Integration was underfunded
- **Spiraling identification and cost (1997-2007)**
 - Percentage of students with a confirmed disability > doubled
 - 2.7% to 6.7% of total enrolments within a decade
 - Special education budget tripled from \$290 million to > \$1 billion
 - Special education ↑ as percentage of the education budget
 - 7.2% to 12.8% of total recurrent spending

[\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)

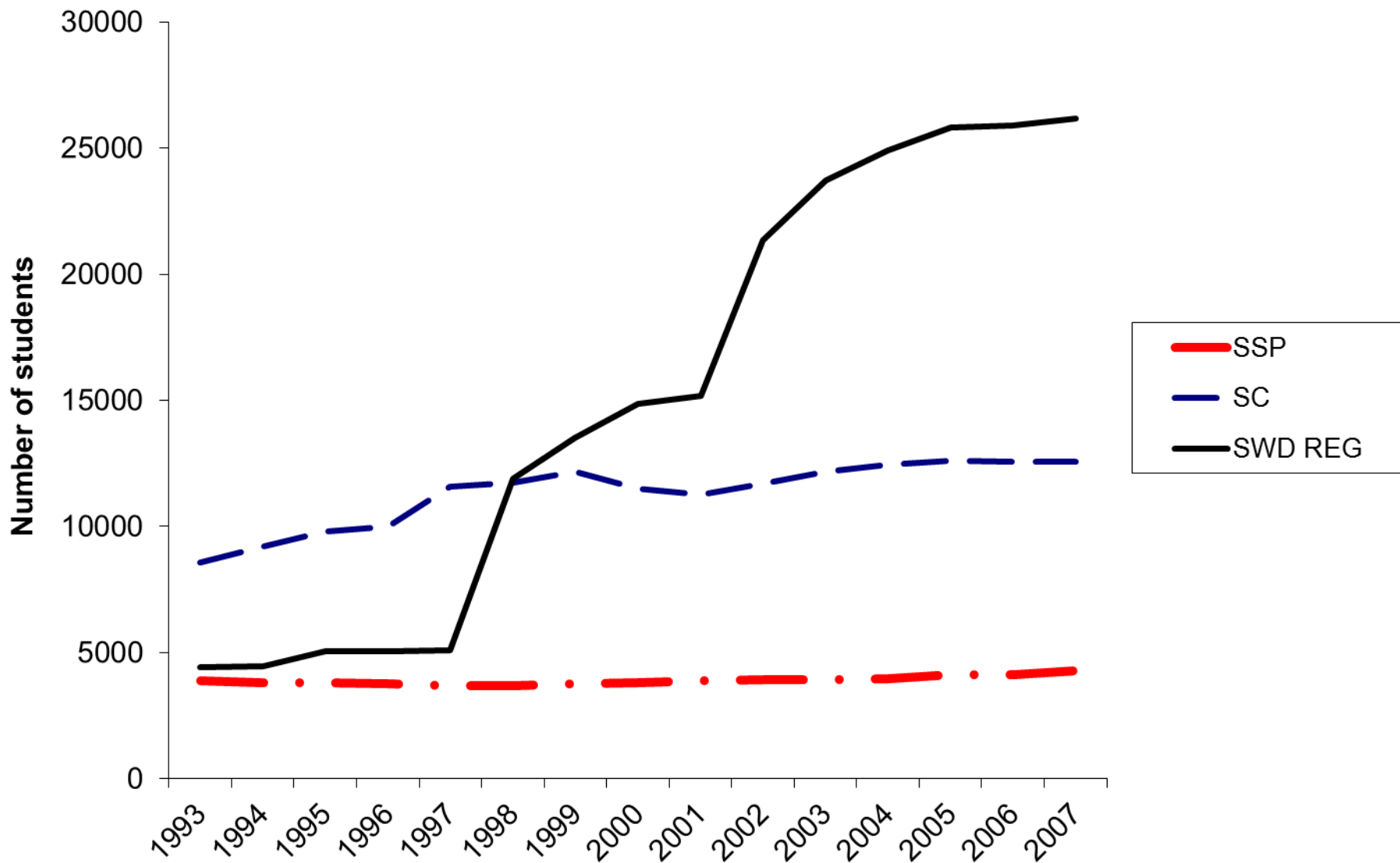


Fig. 1: Number of students enrolled in government special schools (SSP), support classes (SC) and students with a disability in regular classes (SWD REG) from 1993-2007 [\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)

- This increase has occurred against a backdrop of falling enrolments in New South Wales government school enrolments (↓ 3.5%) over the last decade.
- In other words, NSW government schools enrolled *25,537 fewer* students in 2007 than they did in 1997
- Growth in students with a disability classification is occurring mainly among students **already** enrolled in regular classes.

[\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)

What has been happening in NSW?

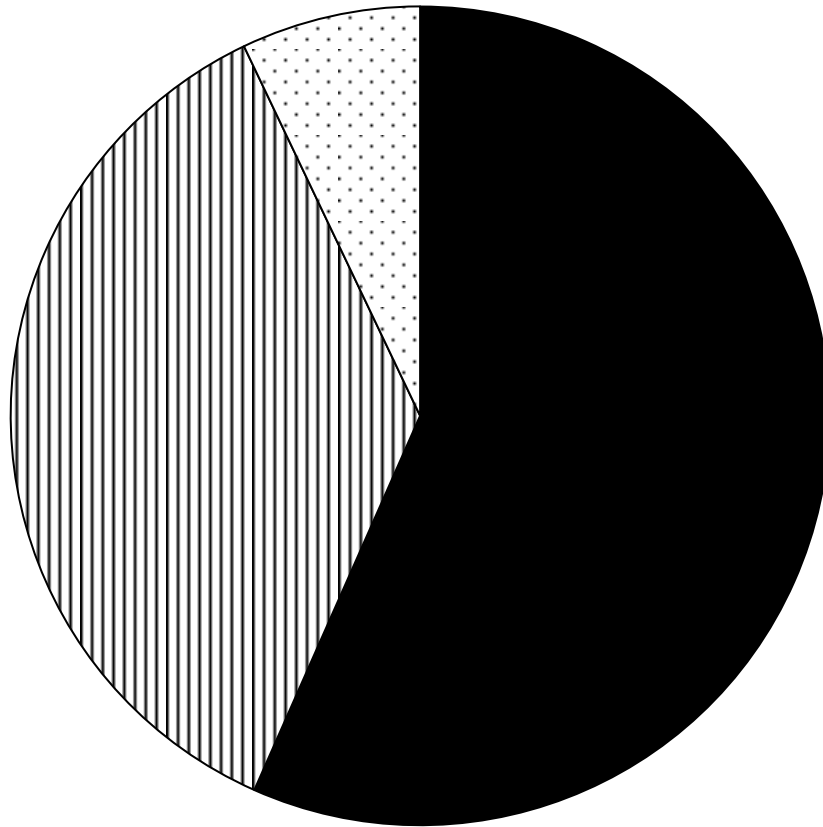
- Enrolment growth in separate special schools
- Enrolment growth in support classes
- Increase in the number of students with a confirmation of disability in regular classes

[\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)

Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)

- ↓ 60% *decrease* in enrolment of students with physical, hearing, vision and mild intellectual impairment
- ↑ 34% *increase* in enrolment of students with moderate intellectual impairment
- ↑ 254% *increase* in the enrolment of students under the category of behavior disorder

[\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)



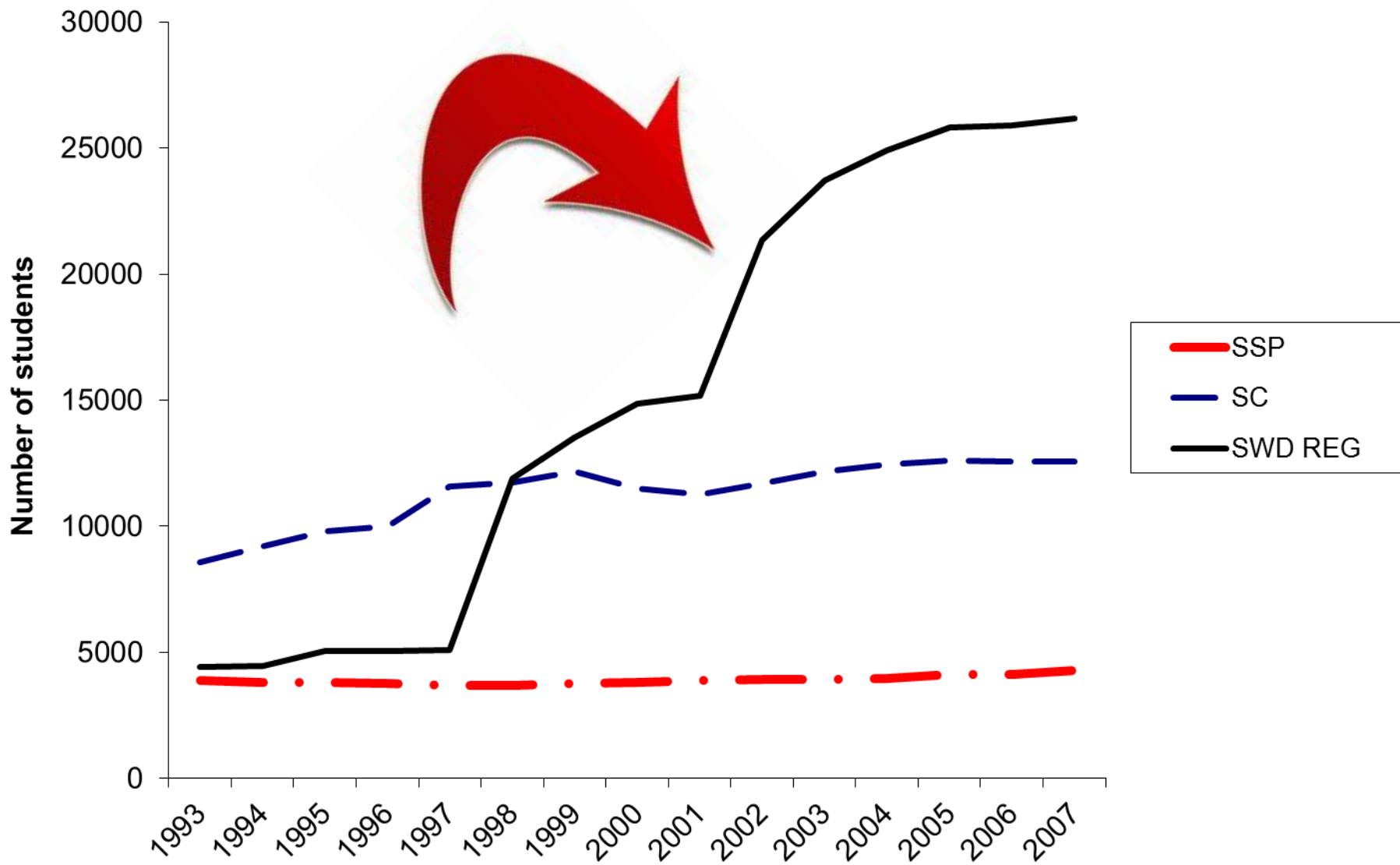
- Traditional SSPs
- ▤ Mental Health SSPs
- ▣ Juvenile Justice SSPs

Figure 2: Distribution of NSW government special schools by purpose
[\(see Graham, 2012\)](#)

Support Classes (SCs)

- Small but significant decrease in **primary** support class placements (physical, hearing, vision ↓ 43%) but significant increases in:
 - emotional disturbance (+139%)
 - autism (+61%)
- Significant *increase* in the use of support classes in **secondary** schools, main drivers:
 - autism (+280%),
 - emotional disturbance (+348%)
 - behaviour disorder (+585%)

[\(see Graham & Sweller, 2011\)](#)



But what was happening here?

Exchange & Transfer

- Movement from special schools and support classes = mainly students with physical, sensory or mild intellectual disability
- Enrolment decrease offset by increased enrolment of students in the categories of emotional disturbance and behaviour disorder
- Majority of students with a confirmation of disability in regular classes have not been ‘integrated’ at all...
- Students typically receiving *Integration Funding Support* are those who tend to be “enrolled in regular classes regardless of the supports available” (Dempsey & Foreman, 1997, p. 214).

(see [Graham & Sweller, 2011](#))

The outcome?

113 Special Schools



Regular schools and “integrated” students



Let's not forget academically selective schools and “opportunity classes”...

Increasing Exclusion

> 2000 Support Classes



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References

- Graham, L.J., (2012). Disproportionate over-representation of Indigenous students in New South Wales government special schools. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(4), 163-176.
- Graham, L. J., & Sweller, N. (2011). The Inclusion Lottery: who's in and who's out? Tracking inclusion and exclusion in New South Wales government schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(9), 941-953.





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