



## Office of Hon Ruth Dyson

Minister of Labour

Minister for ACC

Minister for Senior Citizens

Minister for Disability Issues

Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment (Child, Youth & Family Services)

MP for Banks Peninsula

20 DEC 2006

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Dear

Thank you for your email of 30 November 2006 about my speech to the Dyslexia Foundation Launch on 29 November 2006.

You advise your son is dyslexic, but he receives no targeted assistance other than that which you as parents provide. You also advise that fifteen children in two year levels at your local school are dyslexic and receive no targeted government assistance. You state that the government needs to provide meaningful resources in basic literacy.

I can assure you that government is committed to ensuring that all children have the best opportunity to achieve in education, regardless of disability or learning difficulty. The New Zealand Disability Strategy reinforces this commitment through Objective 3 which is "Provide the best education for disabled people". This objective's actions 3.3, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7 are particularly relevant to the concerns you have raised. They read as follows:

Action 3.3: Ensure that teachers and other educators understand the learning needs of disabled people.

Action 3.4: Ensure that disabled students, families, teachers and other educators have equitable access to the resources available to meet their needs.

Action 3.6: Improve schools' responsiveness to and accountability for the needs of disabled students.

Action 3.7: Promote appropriate and effective inclusive educational settings that will meet individual educational needs.

I can confirm that the approach currently used in the New Zealand education system focuses support according to need, rather than on a category of disability or difficulty. This is in recognition that learning difficulties can be multi-faceted. All require careful assessment and appropriate interventions by trained staff, so that additional learning support can be tailored to an individual child's learning needs.

While I acknowledge that the term "dyslexia" is used in a number of countries to underpin educational programmes, I am also aware that there is no international agreement on its use or around its diagnosis. I understand that the Ministry of Education is currently investigating the diagnosis and application of the term "dyslexia". The first draft of a literature review on this topic is due to be completed in February 2007. When