

# HIDDEN TALENTS

Doing the best for people who think differently  
[www.dyslexia-consulting.com](http://www.dyslexia-consulting.com)



Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry –  
**“A Fair chance for all. Breaking the cycle of persistent  
disadvantage”.**

A response to the interim Report – September 2022

## **Executive Summary**

The words on the back of a Mainfreight Truck say it all –

“Education is the enemy of poverty”.

I am disappointed in the interim report.

- It seems very light on education being the way out of persistent disadvantage.
- There are no references I can find to undiagnosed and unsupported neurodiversity/dyslexia being a root cause of persistent disadvantage.
- Neurodiversity/dyslexia impacts on 15% of Kiwis and is a driver of intergenerational disadvantage for many Kiwis. Any report on remedying intergenerational disadvantage should focus on Dyslexia/neurodiversity – but it does not even appear in the glossary of relevant terms
- The interim report seems overly focused on the various arms of central government ‘doing things for people with persistent disadvantage’ – as opposed to giving the disadvantaged the skills and mindsets to better manage their own way to a better future.
- I see little reference to the intergenerational impacts of low literacy and numeracy skills on the prosperity of Kiwis.

There are three international reports – a decade apart the provide the data for low adult literacy and numeracy – but I see little if any references to them.

Dyslexia/Neurodiversity (D/N)

**It would be productive if the Productivity Commission could show some leadership in moving New Zealand ahead in addressing our very poor history in dealing with dyslexia/neurodiversity.**

Extrapolating the international stats for D/N around 500,000 kiwis continue to be short changed from unidentified and unsupported D/N. For the workplace the figure is around 350,000 employees/employers.

As a nation we are very ignorant about dyslexia. We gather no stats about it, the Human Rights Commission is largely silent about it and there is no reference to it in the country's legislation.

D/N are intergenerational/inherited conditions and with strategies to address them they will continue to be a major cause of intergenerational disadvantage.

D/N plays out in two very different ways: -

1. They result in the presence of a long list of negatives: -
  - School dropouts
  - Underachievement in education
  - High occurrence amongst the NEETs
  - Higher unemployment rates and underemployment rates
  - High incarceration rates – around 50% of prison inmates
  - PTSD and Post Educational Stress Disorder
  - Lower productivity.

2. Because we do not acknowledge dyslexia – we suffer from the absence of the many positive features that the dyslexic brain bestows on people with dyslexia.

There is a Treaty of Waitangi component to the D/N story in New Zealand

See the SPELD data

### **What could change?**

1. A public education programme about dyslexia. To shine the light on it.
2. Some legislative references to it. So that it has some status on the statute books. See The Equality Act in the UK
3. Some changes to the education provisions to ensure that: -
  - children have D/N identified
  - Teachers are trained to recognise it and provide the correct education to address it
4. Some economic inquiry to measure – or estimate the impact on unidentified and unsupported D/N on: -
  - education
  - employment/unemployment
  - Mental health
  - Incarceration rates
  - The nation's productivity

See attachments

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Stuy', is located at the bottom of the page.

M Styles  
Mike Styles

11 November 2022