



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Petitions: Dyslexia**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 5 June 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 5 June 2013  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Pyne, Christopher, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:20): As shadow minister for education I firmly believe that there is no shame in a learning disability; the only shame is if it is not recognised and treated. Dyslexia is a learning disability that can hinder a person's ability to read, write, spell and sometimes even speak and is a major challenge for many children and their parents. Dyslexia affects between three and 10 per cent of the population and can cause great difficulties for children in their early years of schooling if not diagnosed and treated properly. Dyslexia is not a sign that children are lazy or unintelligent. It is a genuine disability, and it is crucial for children who suffer from dyslexia that they receive the appropriate diagnosis, treatment and support in their school.

For parents of children with a disability choices are limited. They want what every parent wants for their child—the right to choose an education that will allow their child to reach their full potential. Currently, students with a disability can expect vastly different treatment depending on which state they live in, what type of school they go to and how their disability is classified. Proper support for children with dyslexia has not always been available. Although attitudes are changing as people come to understand the condition more, there is still much work to be done. We need to ensure that all Australian children with dyslexia get the support they need. It is imperative that dyslexia is recognised for what it is—a disability.

I have been working with Specific Learning Difficulties SA, SPELD, from my electorate of Sturt to raise awareness of this by asking the parliament to formally recognise dyslexia as a disability and to provide funding to ensure that students with dyslexia receive high-quality intervention as soon as diagnosis has been confirmed. Funding to meet the particular needs of students with dyslexia should be regarded as a basic entitlement for that child and should therefore be portable. I am also calling for the use of modified curricula and instruction, appropriate assistive technology and extra time for learning as students with dyslexia progress through school.

Recently I presented over 10,000 signatures on petitions advocating for the recognition of dyslexia as a disability to the Standing Committee on Petitions. The petition asks the House of Representatives to endorse the use of modified curricula and instruction,

appropriate assistive technology and extra time for learning as students with dyslexia progress through school. I am pleased to present to the parliament the signed petition and ask that it is tabled at the end of my contribution.

I would like to use this forum to acknowledge the hard work of Angela Weeks and her team at SPELD SA. This was a tremendous community effort by all involved and I am extremely proud of everyone who signed this petition and circulated it. Recognition of dyslexia as a genuine disability and the provision of appropriate support will ensure that students with dyslexia are no longer discriminated against by our education systems.

On a personal note, can I say that my father, who was an ophthalmologist, was the first vice-president of SPELD in South Australia in the early 1970s and was known for his work in trying to break ground in using assistance through ophthalmology through optometry for children with dyslexia. He was acknowledged for his work by being named Father of the Year in South Australia in 1975 for his work with children with dyslexia. I table the petition.

*The petition read as follows—*

To the honourable speaker and members of the House of Representatives:

This petition draws to the attention of the House concerns about the lack of recognition given to students with dyslexia in Australia.

Education systems and schools need to accept the clinical diagnosis of dyslexia and recognise that diagnosis indicates a genuine learning disability.

We therefore ask the House to recognise dyslexia as a disability and to provide funding to ensure that students with dyslexia receive high-quality intervention as soon as diagnosis has been confirmed.

This petition asks the House to endorse the use of modified curricula and instruction, appropriate assistive technology, and extra time for learning as students with dyslexia progress through school.

So that high-stakes tests and examinations assess ability and not disability, it is essential that students

with dyslexia be offered access to accommodations, additional time, and the use of a computer.

Recognition of dyslexia as a genuine disability and the provision of appropriate support will ensure that students with dyslexia are no longer discriminated against by our education systems.

from 8,647 and 641 citizens.

Petition received.