

## EDUCATION (UPDATE) AMENDMENT BILL

The Supplementary Order Paper #250 to the Education (Update) Amendment Bill makes amendments to ban enforced seclusion and to regulate the use of physical restraint of a student.

I am Turk Turnbull. I am 16 and I am a student attending a NZ school. I would like to think I represent students. I am a typical young person, as I fit in comfortably with "mainstream society." I do not have additional needs.

I would like to think I represent all students, especially the students who do not have a voice. The students who have been getting restrained and forced into small dark rooms at school, alone and afraid, because they don't have a voice, because they have special needs that school staff do not understand and even take advantage of.

They say some schools have made their own judgement to treat students this way to protect themselves, others or property. I am in year 12, and have attended a few schools, and on most regular days I witness students, lash out at others, hit, kick, and threaten, however I have never heard of, or seen a student being locked in a seclusion room.

I represent my brother. He was being cruelly treated this way at school, but was unable to tell Mum, Dad or me. His actions were his words.

Today I am his voice.

My brother and I support the banning of enforced seclusion. Absolutely.

This is why:

- Locking someone away is the opposite of including them.
- Seclusion uses physical force and restraint.
- It is frightening
- It is violent and encourages violence
- It hurts
- It is shameful
- It is cruel and degrading
- It can be abuse and fosters abuse
- It is dark and frightening

My brother is 15 now and he is still frightened of the dark. He gets freaked out in small spaces. He gets frightened a lot. He does not go to school anymore so he does not get restrained and shut in a small, dark and grimy storeroom anymore. He is not covered in bruises anymore.

When I was in year 8, I presented a speech to my class at school. It was about my brother "A person who displays Excellence".

**I'm going to tell you about me, my brother and autism.**

Autism is a disorder that has no cause and no cure and is something that is in my life every day. It is in my life every day because my brother has autism. My life experiences are pretty big for a kid my age because of this.

There are things that make him – in your words [different] but in my words unique.

He has a photographic memory but he cannot read face expressions. He taught himself how to read when he was 4 years old, but still has trouble getting dressed and he is nearly 12. He has supersonic hearing, but doesn't seem to listen. He can speak lots of different languages, but has trouble with ours. He seems fearless, but always wants the lights on at night. He doesn't say much, but is very noisy.

My brother finds it hard to understand the rules of games, school rules or just life rules.

Autism does not only effect the person who has it, it effects all the people around them.

There are many famous people that are suspected to have been autistic such as Albert Einstein, Beethoven, Mozart, Bill Gates, and Steven Spielberg. These people are also regarded as creative and geniuses. Their special way of thinking and unique ideas has made a big difference to the world. I hope one day my brother will make his mark on the world too.

My brother is special and that makes me special too, because I have to be really tolerant, understanding and strong when times get tough. He makes me feel lots of different emotions and not all of them are good, but I love him. He is a cool brother. We are best friends and always will be.

Even though my brother needs the lights on at night, has trouble communicating, finds dressing himself a daily challenge and finds it difficult to read people face expressions, which may make you think he is different but in my words, he is unique and he displays excellence every day for the efforts he makes just to 'fit in'.

I know my brother was trying to fit in at the specialist school he attended. I think he could not tell us what was happening to him there because he knew it was bad. He knew it was wrong and hated being treated that degrading way. He thought he was bad.

For the first time, my brother told lies to my parents. In February 2015, the night before the Ministry of Education investigator interviewed my Mum and Dad, they asked him about the "little room" and this is what he said:

Mum: "We just wanted to ask you something about school. Sometimes when you were at school did the teachers put you in the little room?"

Brother: "No!"

Mum: "Did you ever go in the little room?"

Brother: "No... Did not!"

Mum: "Do you know what the little room is?"

Brother: "Yes."

Mum: "What's the little room?"

Brother: "It's bad kids. It's bad kids place. It's like doom. It's like god damn doom."

Mum: "Can you remember what it looks like?"

Brother: "It's like a hole...it's like a hole. There's a hole in there. It's a hole."

Mum: "What kids go in the little room? Do you know any kids that go in the little room?"

Brother: "Yes."

Mum: "Which ones?"

Brother: "Albert"

Mum: "Albert does, does he? Who else?"

Brother: "Bill".

Mum: "Bill, too?"

Brother: "Steven. Albert and Bill."

Mum: "When [you] were at school, did sometimes the van come, and [you] go there too?"

Brother: "No."

Dad: "Can you remember what the little room looks like? What kind of floor did it have?"

Brother: "Spike traps everywhere."

Dad: "Did it. What about the walls? What was on the walls?"

Brother: "Spikes. That has spikes. What the hell."

Nobody has ever asked about my brother. Apart from my Mum and Dad, nobody has ever asked my brother about how he was treated at school. Nobody has even met my brother. Nobody seems to care.

My brother learns at home now, and my Mum is learning too, because you see, my brother is super smart in a gifted way. He no longer goes to school. He no longer needs medication. He no longer hurts himself, or talks of ending his life.

I know he would like to go to school "like a normal boy" and I am truly sad he doesn't.

I stand for my brother, and I stand for all students. Please ban enforced seclusion in schools. Please ensure schools understand how to treat all students with respect, dignity and decency.

**My brother is an awesome human being and someone who displays excellence every day for the efforts he makes just to fit in.**

I would like to speak my submission.

Thank you.