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Debate Surrounds Queensland's Plan for Six New Special Schools

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Queensland's plan to build six new special schools has sparked debate, with supporters praising increased choice for parents and critics arguing it entrenches segregation over inclusive education. This article examines the \$1.09 billion investment, its implications for students with disabilities, and the polarized views on its necessity.

The Queensland Government, led by Premier David Crisafulli, announced a historic \$1.09 billion investment in the 2025–26 Budget to construct six new special schools in Central Logan (Berrinba), Beenleigh, Coomera, Moreton Bay South, Springfield-Redbank, and Ipswich West, with a combined capacity for 800 students (The Premier Queensland, 26 June 2025). Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek emphasised parental choice, stating, “We’re delivering new special schools to ensure no Queensland kid is left behind” (Ministerial Media Statements, 25 June 2025). The initiative, part of a \$21.9 billion Education Budget, aims to address rising enrolment demand in South East Queensland’s fast-growing regions, where special education needs have surged (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority , 2023).

However, the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE) has condemned the plan, arguing it “condemns generations to segregated schooling” and contradicts the 2023 Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability’s push for inclusive education (People with Disability Australia, 30 June 2025). The Commission’s split recommendations—three commissioners favoured phasing out special schools by 2052, while others supported their continuation—highlight the contentious debate (The Saturday Paper, 3 October 2023). Critics like Professor Linda Graham from Queensland University of Technology argue mainstream schools are “dumping” students with neurodevelopmental disorders into special schools due to competitive pressures like National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results (The Guardian, 2 October 2023).

Supporters counter that special schools provide tailored environments for complex needs such as autism spectrum disorder, which mainstream

settings often fail to accommodate. Yet, ACIE warns that special school students are 85% more likely to face lifelong segregation, impacting employment and living arrangements (People with Disability Australia, 30 June 2025). As Queensland expands its special education infrastructure, the debate underscores a deeper question: whether inclusion or specialisation best serves students with disabilities.