

Dismay at level of dyslexic help

Arwen Hann
Education reporter

The Government's failure to provide specific funding to aid students with dyslexia has angered a lobby group.

The Dyslexia Foundation said the Government should "put up or shut up" after Education Minister Chris Carter did not deliver a funding package it claims was promised.

Carter spoke at the official launch of Dyslexia Awareness Week on Tuesday but his speech included only a general commitment to improve accessibility to information about dyslexia and an acknowledgement of work done by the foundation.

"I fully support the foundation in improving public understanding and awareness of dyslexia," he said.

"It is vital that we have an education system that continues to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties, including those with dyslexia."

The foundation's chairman of trustees, Guy Pope-Mayell, said the group had been lobbying hard for specific funding.

Carter had told the foundation last year that money for professional development for teachers would be forthcoming and former education minister

Steve Maharey had also promised specific funding, Pope-Mayell said.

"The minister's apparent reluctance to earmark specific funds is a tough blow for New Zealand's 70,000 dyslexic school children," he said.

"One in 10 of our children struggles with dyslexia and this is something that desperately needs addressing. On top of failing to front up with funding, a flimsy press statement registering support for the foundation's work really just adds insult to injury."

A survey of education professionals, done on behalf of the foundation, showed 95 per cent of respondents thought specific funding should be allocated for dyslexia and 99% believed this would also have benefits for non-dyslexic children, he said.

However, Carter said steps to help dyslexic students had been taken since the Government officially recognised dyslexia last year.

A booklet to help schools and parents identify dyslexia and seek help was already available and further specific resources were being developed.

The work was being done as part of the Education Ministry's literacy work programme.