

Submission

No 104

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

Organisation: Northern Territory Government  
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The Committee Manager  
Committee on Children and Young People  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Committee Manager

Thank you for your letter dated 21 May 2008 in relation to the New South Wales Joint Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People's Inquiry into children and young people aged 9-14 years inviting the Northern Territory's response to a number of significant questions being considered by the Committee.

The Northern Territory's response to the Committee's questions is attached to this letter.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for inviting the Northern Territory to provide comment and look forward to receiving a copy of the report detailing outcomes of the Inquiry.

If you have any further questions please contact the Office of Youth Affairs on 8999 3862.

Yours sincerely

MATTHEW BONSON

- 8 JUL 2008



**NEW SOUTH WALES JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14  
NORTHERN TERRITORY RESPONSE**

**Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport**

**What would you consider to be the priority issues for children and young people aged 9 to 14 years?**

*Sport and Recreation*

- Increased participation in sport and recreation activities, given the health, education and social benefits of involvement in physical activities.
- Better opportunities for supported sport pathways to develop skills and talent in an environment of fun and enjoyment.
- Development of sporting programs, in conjunction with schools, that increase participation levels of school age children and young people.
- Access to sport and recreation facilities that are an incentive to participate in sport and recreation.
- Better opportunities for Indigenous children and young people to participate in sport and recreation, particularly in remote communities.
- Close working partnership between health, education and sport/recreation agencies to promote the lifestyle benefits of physical activity, good nutrition and healthy living.

*Housing*

- Safe, secure and affordable housing.

Safe, secure and affordable housing underpins access to the many opportunities that the Northern Territory (NT) offers. This is particularly true for children and young people, where a stable housing situation provides a basis for improved health and welfare outcomes and regular schooling.

*Libraries*

- Low literacy levels in young people in remote Indigenous communities.
- Inadequate access to mainstream information and communication technology services in remote communities.

Remote communities and townships remain isolated from broadband access with resulting disadvantage in terms of access to modern telecommunications (ie internet and mobile phone services). This restricts access to online education, health services and other general information-based services that contribute positively to the development and wellbeing of children.

## Are you aware of any effective programs relating to these issues?

### *Sport and Recreation*

- *goNT* is a NT whole of government and community initiative that promotes physical activity, improved nutrition and the development of supportive environments for active living, for all age groups.
- The *Little Sports Booklet* is a new initiative to provide information on sports and sporting clubs in the NT. The target group is young people.
- *Mataranka Community Sports and Arts Week*. A week of sport, cultural and personal development activities for school age children from Katherine Group Schools (includes remote Indigenous schools).
- *Melaleuca Swim Program* targets Sudanese and Burmese migrants between the ages of 11-18 years. This swim and pool awareness program is delivered in partnership with Melaleuca Refugee Centre, the Royal Life Saving Society and the Water Safety Branch of the NT Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport.
- In partnership with local government councils and shires, the NT Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport funds Community Sport and Recreation Officers to run sport and recreation programs for young Indigenous people in remote communities. Indigenous sports programs are run in conjunction with peak sporting bodies such as AFLNT, Softball NT and the NT Touch Association.
- *NT Sport Linkup* is an interactive website which is a useful tool in encouraging young people to get active through sporting activities and in providing information about available sports and sporting clubs throughout the Territory.

### *Housing*

The NT's public housing authority, Territory Housing, works to meet the housing needs of those households most in need.

- Employment Incentive Scheme (EIS)

Territory Housing's EIS reduces the financial disincentives that may apply when a public housing tenant gains employment or increases their participation in the workforce and provides tenants with a pathway to greater independence and stability.

The main feature of EIS is a series of stepped rent increases over the first six months of employment in order to gradually ease the household rent to market rent if the increase in income would normally result in the tenant being required to pay full market rent immediately.

The EIS is aligned with Centrelink's Working Credits scheme to provide public housing tenants with an incentive to participate in the work force. EIS gives a tenant time to experience the non-financial benefits of participation in the workforce prior to their rent being increased whilst having the extra income protected from means testing by Centrelink.

- Indigenous Client Liaison Officers

Territory Housing provides extensive support to Indigenous clients with a high level of need through Indigenous Client Liaison Officers (ICLOs). The role of the ICLOs is to ensure that Indigenous clients have the best possible support when applying for and living in public housing. The ICLOs work closely with the Indigenous Housing Assistance Service providers to support Indigenous clients who are experiencing difficulties in sustaining their tenancy. This ensures that Indigenous clients have access to support networks and other support services.

#### *Libraries*

- Public libraries provide programs for all ages, including children and youth. Programs range from literacy and reading challenges to recreational and holiday activities and homework help.
- The NT Library (NTL) provides support for library programs and partners with other agencies, to provide effective services to young people.
- NTL is a partner in the ArtStories project, which enables students, school staff and families to participate in a range of arts activities to create stories of self, family, community and dreams.
- YourTutor, an online tutoring service for students in years 4-12. Students can sign on to get free individual help with school subjects in a chat environment each week day afternoon and evening. This service is available through all public libraries and knowledge centres in the NT.
- Digital storytelling workshops encourage young people aged 12 - 18 to develop their literacy and technology skills through storytelling using multimedia.

#### **Any other matter on which you wish to comment, of relevance to the Inquiry.**

Sustainable long term results for improving the life outcomes of Indigenous children can only be achieved through focusing on improved outcomes for Aboriginal families as a whole.

It is important that the focus on Indigenous Australians, and particularly children and young people, continues in sport and recreation as well as all government agendas.

## Department of Health and Families

### What would you consider to be the priority issues for children and young people aged 9 to 14 years?

- Safe recreational activities.
- Engaging in risky behaviour. For example, drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, roaming streets at night unsupervised, violence.
- Safety at home. For example, family violence / abuse.

### Are you aware of any effective programs relating to these issues?

- National Youth Week (NYW) is a joint Australian Government, State, Territory and Local Government initiative that provides young Australians (12-25 years) with the opportunity to express ideas, raise concerns and act on issues while encouraging communities to take notice of their young people and celebrate the positive contribution they make.

The theme for NYW has always been 'to celebrate and recognise the value of all young Australians to their communities.'

The Office of Youth Affairs, Department of Health and Families manages this initiative and represents the Northern Territory in consultations with other jurisdictions.

During the 2008 NYW, the Office of Youth Affairs co-ordinated over 120 innovative and fun activities that reflected young Territorians' interests, issues and concerns, including targeted activities that engaged disadvantaged young people.

- The Office of Youth Affairs also administers the Youth Engagement Grants Program. This program aims to assist young Territorians to access a variety of youth-related events and personal development programs and activities.

Young people are involved in the planning, staging and evaluating of activities that reflect their needs and interests.

The program consists of three grant rounds:

- \* *National Youth Week.* This grant round funds activities during National Youth Week in April each year.
- \* *Youth Vibe Holiday Grants.* This grant round funds activities during the June/July and December/January school holidays.
- \* *Quick Response Mini Grants.* These grants enable the Office to have the capacity to respond to urgent requests for funding (up to \$500) that meet the selection criteria.
- Access to mentors and positive role models through recreation programs that receive funding from the Department of Health and Families such as:

- \* *E-Cruz*. A Youth Activity Program for young people aged 10 to 15 run by the Australian Red Cross (NT Division).
  - \* *Majimap's The Underground*. A program for youth at risk providing out of hours sports activities and a mentoring program in Darwin.
  - \* *YWCA Sisters Project*. A program using creativity, expression and information to provide support, build self esteem, skills, safety and social links for young women aged between 12 and 21 years. The project is currently focusing on three key areas: young women's wellbeing programs, antenatal and postnatal programs, and a young women's reference group. The project offers a diverse range of group work programs.
- *Mooditj Program* is a sexual health and positive lifestyle program for Indigenous youth aged 8-14 years. The program is run by a core group of about 15 women in Maningrida who patrol the community building relationships with the children, so they can protect them. The Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation receives funding from the Department of Health and Families to provide the *Mooditj Program*.
  - *7 Steps to Safety* kit helps parents plan for the safety of their children at home. The kit aims to give children the skills and confidence they need to feel and be safe at home.
  - *Youth Beat* (Mission Australia) is a Youth Outreach Service connecting with young people who are on the streets at night time. The focus of the service is on engaging and connecting with young people for the purposes of relationship building, information provision, referral and crisis response. *Youth Beat* receives funding from the NT Department of Health and Families.

## Department of Employment, Education and Training

The Department of Employment, Education and Training provided responses to the Terms of Reference

Responses to the Terms of Reference 1 and 2 combined:

- 1. *The needs of children and young people in this age group.***
- 2. *The impact of age, gender and disadvantage.***

In the NT, the Middle Years of schooling refers to students who are aged between 11-14 years. For full implementation of the Middle Years Stage of Schooling in the NT, Middle Schools have been created as dedicated facilities for middle years students. All were open and ready for student intake at the beginning of 2008. Middle Years approaches in our Middle Schools are now focusing on exploring and implementing the most effective curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and organisational structures for students in the Middle Years.

Using national and international research as an evidence basis for educational reform, it was recognised that the characteristics of early adolescence in the NT included:

- students experiencing rapid physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth;
- students are forming values, relationships and patterns of behaviour for both the short and long term; and
- students experiencing various personal, social and economic pressures that interact to create new discoveries and challenges for these students (peer/group pressure, diverse family structures, harmful substances, unemployment, television and the media, feelings of loneliness, depression and alienation).

At the same time:

- achievement levels of many students flatten out during this phase;
- many students disengage from their learning;
- there are more serious cases of misconduct;
- there are substantial differences between schools in student learning outcomes; and
- there are larger differences in student learning outcomes between classes in individual schools.

In addition, in our unique NT remote context, schools are working on developing responses to the following challenges:

- attendance and retention of students;
- staff retention;
- working in contexts where students and staff are learning English as a second or third language;



- the majority of Indigenous students in remote contexts aged between 11 and 14 are using Standard Australian English at Beginning Levels to Band 2 (equivalent to the first three years of schooling in large urban contexts); and
- whole school communities are operating within this range of Standard Australian English (as opposed to urban contexts where students presenting with this level of English would be grouped into special intervention programs).

Responses to the Terms of Reference 3.

### **3. The activities, services and support required.**

Middle Schooling in the NT has the identified moral purpose of improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for students in the Middle Years. Shaping Middle Schooling In Australia (Barrett, 1997) summarised research findings concerning Middle Schooling as including a number of distinguishing features. The essence of these is known as the principles that guide Middle Schooling in Australia:

- **Learning Centred** – coherent learning opportunities focussed on the needs, interests and concerns of students, teachers and school communities, with an emphasis on self-directed and co-constructed learning;
- **Collaboratively Organised** – powerful pedagogical content knowledge employed by teams of teachers who know and understand their students and who challenge and extend them in supported environments;
- **Teaching Teams** – collegial teams working together to plan, facilitate, assess and report learning, ensuring meaningful and authentic demonstrations of outcomes and judgements of achievement, within and beyond discipline areas;
- **Outcomes Based** – explicit statements of what each student is expected to know and is able to do, aligned within the standards described in the curriculum framework;
- **Flexibly Constructed** – creative uses of time, space and other resources that are responsive to local need and circumstances;
- **Ethically Aware** – everyday practices of teachers, students and leaders reflecting justice, care, respect and concern for the needs of others;
- **Community Orientated** – productive partnerships between parents, the school and other stakeholders to support authentic and rigorous learning experiences for all students; and
- **Strategically Linked** – discrete phase of schooling implemented within a P-12 continuum and connected with the Primary and Senior Years.

In addition, schools are now exploring the following ideas in the identified broad areas:

#### **Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum:**

- structure real life and integrated learning experiences based on student interests and experiences;
- higher order and critical thinking skills;
- planning curriculum to link directly to learning outcomes;

- authentic assessment and involving students in self-assessment learning cycles;
- opportunities for students to share responsibility for what they learn and how it is assessed;
- vary teaching methods and flexibly adapting curriculum to meet student needs;
- developing standards and targets for students that include both performance and achievement elements; and
- monitoring and assessing students against the standards and targets.

#### **Teachers:**

- professional learning teams which are responsible for all students in the team's care and for each other's professional growth;
- smaller teams of teachers working with groups of students for an extended period of time (2 or more years). This supports the development of positive teacher-student relationships; and
- on-going professional learning for teachers to support and improve their knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, curriculum, literacy, ESL, assessment, etc.

#### **Leadership:**

- instructional leadership – a clear sense of educational vision which is translated into concrete action;
- individual leadership (can also mean team leadership) – interpersonal leadership required to motivate and engage staff to commit to the educational vision; and
- organisational leadership – the establishment of the necessary structures, systems and processes in order that the vision is able to be translated into plans and strategies which can be effectively implemented.

(*Marshall. G What Leaders Can Do to Improve Their Schools, IARTV 2002*)

#### **School Organisation:**

- attention is given to the allocation of time, staff, resources;
- the timetable is flexible and provides for longer blocks of instruction time to allow for in-depth study;
- more flexible use of space to allow for cooperative groupings and non-traditional classroom organisation; and
- the establishment of home rooms or sub-schools.

**In addition, through Teaching, Learning and Standards Division (TL&S), the following support services are provided:**

The Middle Years of Schooling Team within TL&S will work with school and local area leadership teams to facilitate school based, customised professional learning that includes the following:

- use of a vision and values based approach to strategically plan school and/or local area improvement and development;
- identify professional learning priorities and facilitate professional learning opportunities aimed at improving student outcomes through a focus on curriculum, assessment and pedagogy;
- initiate and sustain communities of practice where teachers and support staff within schools and across the Local Area Group, with a shared commitment to reflecting on and developing their professional practice, work collaboratively to research, trial and evaluate approaches to curriculum, assessment and/or pedagogy in order to improve student learning outcomes.

The Numeracy Team within TL&S will provide both site based and centrally facilitated professional learning opportunities for Working Mathematically in the Middle Years.

The Accelerated Literacy (AL) Team within TL&S provides professional learning for teachers working in identified AL schools through:

- school based training in the AL methodology and ongoing mentoring to plan and teach accelerated literacy and assess student English proficiency; and
- centrally delivered workshops to provide intensive training in Accelerated Literacy theory and practice.

The Literacy/ESL Team within TL&S provides both site based and centrally facilitated professional learning opportunities, including training in the following recommended approaches:

- ESL/ESD Across the Curriculum;
- Walking Talking Texts – Column Planner;
- ESL for Indigenous Students; and
- First Steps and Stepping Out.

The Assessment and Reporting Team within TL&S provides site based and customised professional learning at the school and local area levels, to:

- facilitate moderation processes and protocols aimed at sustaining a culture of consistency in teacher judgements when assessing student evidence of learning;
- assist schools to use data informed decision making and strategic planning processes including a focus on improving the quality of data collected concerning student learning;
- deliver training in the use of the Curriculum e-Tool for recording and reporting student achievement; and

- design assessment tasks, collect and analyse student learning using a theoretical model, to develop and verify the NT Curriculum Framework performance standards through a Standards Validation process.

The Curriculum and Assessment, Research and Development Team (CARDT) within TL&S provides site based and centrally facilitated professional learning for teachers with a focus on:

- using an action-research methodology to develop teaching and learning opportunities that incorporate the effective use of digital technologies (Action Learning with Learning Objects Project);
- planning and implementing programs for Indigenous languages and culture in remote schools;
- developing teaching and learning experiences that engage students with Asia (Engaging with Asia Project);
- engaging whole school communities in action based approaches to environmental and sustainability education;
- developing programs that engage students in civics and citizenship education;
- renewing NT curriculum documentation and Layer 2 support materials; and
- support and information on Values Education through the Valuing the EsseNTials project.

The Teaching and Learning Framework project provides locally designed and centrally facilitated opportunities for teachers to participate in and contribute to:

- action research projects aimed at examining the principles and practices of teachers' pedagogical decisions and strategies in order to improve student outcomes.

Student Services Division within NT DEET work to support learner well-being and school communities across the broad areas of Disabilities and Well-being and provide support in the following ways:

- implementing Inclusive Schools and Safe Schools NT Framework;
- professional Learning and support regarding educational Assessment;
- supporting schools regarding Hearing, Vision, Special Education, Early Childhood Intervention and Educational Psychologists/Guidance; and
- supporting school communities through Behaviour Management Advisors, School Counsellors, Wellbeing Officers, Alternative Education Provision and Transitions from school for students with disabilities.