



**House of
Representatives
Standing Committee on
Indigenous Affairs.
Inquiry into Educational
Opportunities for
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Students.**

Hearing 21 March 2016

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Catholic Education in the Northern Territory

Overview

Catholic Education in the Northern Territory (CENT) has been operating in Indigenous Communities for over 100 years. In the last nine years this effort has been combined with an intense investment from all levels of government which has allowed us to work on specific and targeted responses to issues faced long term.

A consequence of this investment is that schools operating at their maximum spread were now required to work outside their scope of experience.

Through effectively managing projects our intent is to improve outcomes for students incrementally.

Managing change is a constant need, however a challenge in itself is the frequent change in government focus. Change often causes angst in a community to both staff, students and community members alike.

CENT is cautious when talking about specific outcomes or individual approaches to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students as each school operates in environments with differing and complex factors. **Success is normally made up of significant effort from multiple activities.**

CENT operates with shared responsibility between schools and the office. This utilises expertise across the system while being cognizant of experience/ capacity of staff, contexts, requirements (contractual, policies, processes) and goals. The need for the right staff to deliver a project/ program is essential. However much funding is year to year and the effect is not having the ability to offer long term employment which impacts personnel applying and staying with CENT and hence long term results.

Catholic Indigenous Leadership Team

CENT has a Catholic Indigenous Leadership Team (CILT) which is an advisory group to the system and is made up of Indigenous leaders from the communities serviced. CILT inputs into strategic planning at a system level as well as advises about what they believe is important and activity that will lead to positive outcomes for students.

Catalyst of Resourcing Change

One example of change was the Smarter Schools National Partnerships (SSNP) which consisted of the following National Partnerships:

- Improving Teacher Quality;
- Literacy and Numeracy;
- Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities;

- Closing the Gap.

School communities participating in the SSNP were required to align funded activity with reform elements and their school improvement plan. This gave schools the ability to design projects that aligned with their schools focus and had ownership as schools were empowered to do activity they believed would work in their school in their specific communities.

This further focused schools on improving school improvement planning processes which they were embarking on at the time. Please note reform elements were discerned by government. Please note tables 1 and 2 were from the SSNP Bilateral agreement between the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth of Australia and Implementation plan executed 20.01.2010.

Table 1

Reform Element	Teacher Quality	Literacy & Numeracy	Low SES	Closing the Gap
Principals Leading Whole School Reform in Partnership with Communities				
Enhancing School Leadership				
Devolved Resource Management				
Staff Incentives				
Student Attendance and Engagement				
Student Well Being Wrap				
Flexible and Innovative Remote Delivery				
Family and Community Engagement				
Evidence-Based Practice				
Diagnostic Systems and Data Literacy				
Site Based Professional Learning				
ESL Professional Learning and Accreditation				
Teacher Professionalism and Performance				
Education Career Pathways				
Staff Support Wrap				
Centres of Excellence				
Research – Very Remote Contexts				
Driving Transformation				

Table 2

Reform Element	RWSR	ERIS	EUS	MILaN	SSR	SIRSF
Principals Leading Whole School Reform in Partnership with Communities						
Enhancing School Leadership						
Devolved Resource Management						
Staff Incentives						
Student Attendance and Engagement						
Student Well Being Wrap						
Flexible and Innovative Remote Delivery						
Family and Community Engagement						
Evidence-Based Practice						
Diagnostic Systems and Data Literacy						
Site Based Professional Learning						
ESL Professional Learning and Accreditation						
Teacher Professionalism and Performance						
Education Career Pathways						
Staff Support Wrap						
Centres of Excellence						
Research – Very Remote Contexts						
Driving Transformation						

- Schools were eligible for funding dependent on their classification, which included:
 - Remote Whole School Reform;
 - Engaging Remote Indigenous Students;
 - Engaging Urban Students;
 - Maximising Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy;
 - Supporting Indigenous Residential Students and their Families.

The process for discerning activity for SSNP projects was flexible and this has translated to real outcomes in communities. The performance indicators were from the Education agreement linked with the reform elements so the focus was reform.

Project Management Framework

As a result of the SSNP CENT implemented a new role with a focus on project management support for schools and the office. The purpose of the support is with a vision of having effective and efficient leadership of projects so reform may occur that leads to improved outcomes for students.

The focus included:

- Support schools and the office with:
 - viability testing of ideas that may be potential projects;
 - managing risk ;
 - managing scope creep;
 - reviewing contractual obligations including reporting requirements;
 - reviewing if the project activities are delivering reform.

Current Indigenous Students Enrolments and Attendance

School	Enrolment	Attendance
Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Karama	38	91%
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Wanguri	40	94%
Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School, Santa Teresa	137	64%
Mackillop Catholic College, Johnston	96	84%
Murupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School, Wurrumiyanga	213	68%
O'Loughlin Catholic College, Karama	99	80%
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College, Alice Springs	100	89%
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College, Wadeye	705	45%
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Woodroffe	49	86%
St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Humpty Doo	18	92%
St Francis Xavier Catholic School, Nauiyu	51	57%
St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Darwin	16	92%
St John's Catholic College, Darwin	108	82%
St Joseph's Catholic College, Katherine	83	83%
St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre, Alice Springs	96	33%
St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Nightcliff	17	94%
Xavier Catholic College, Wurrumiyanga	138	67%

Projects – what we have learnt

Please note this document summarizes a few projects that have occurred at CENT. Some of these projects have been included in the Projects Evidence document which has more extensive data.

Systemic Projects

Growing Our Own

Vision

Growing Our Own (GOO) aims to develop a quality, local Indigenous teacher workforce specifically to support Indigenous Assistant Teachers to become Teachers.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the GOO program are to:

- Specifically increase the number of community based qualified Indigenous teachers;
- Offer a quality pre-service Bachelor of Teaching and Learning degree in community in a culturally appropriate manner that will improve capacity of the Indigenous education workforce within the Indigenous Catholic Community Schools;

- Ensure students complete the course requirements, including progressive exit points such as Certificate or completed Bachelor qualification; and
- Support Graduate teachers for smooth transition from Teacher Assistants to fully qualified teachers.

Overview/ Data

- This project has been included in the Projects Evidence document.
- GOO has had three different funding agreements.
- GOO began in 2009 and continues.
- 55 Students have enrolled in GOO since its inception.
- Currently 20 students are enrolled.
- 21 Graduates to date.
- 11 graduates teach in CENT schools.
- 5 are working as teachers in other education systems.
- 14 students have withdrawn:
 - some are looking to re-enter
 - 10 have continued to work as Teacher Assistants.
 - 4 no longer worker with CENT.

Inclusion Support Team

Vision

To strengthen the capacity of schools and teachers to provide additional support to students with disabilities, contributing to improvements in their learning experiences, educational outcomes and transitions to further education or work.

Objectives

- Provide training for practicing teachers to build their skills in inclusion support.
- Support teachers to develop or modify lesson plans to support the needs of students.
- To identify students requiring additional support.

Overview

- Funding for this activity has been through several funding agreements and has been iterative and cumulative work.
- CENT is completing development of 'Inspire' a custom design software application for inclusion support. Inspire;
 - Streamlines services to school;
 - Provides instant access to appropriate intervention strategies;
 - Enabling early intervention whilst awaiting specialist assessment;
 - Collects data as required by the National Consistent Collection of Data for Students with Disabilities;
 - Streamline management of referrals and funding requests;

Indigenous Leadership

Vision

To create strong Indigenous Leadership at each Indigenous Catholic Community School.

Objectives

- Engage with remote Indigenous school communities to understand what their aspirations are for their children.
- For the system to receive understanding and feedback in regards to aspirations and needs for education of Indigenous students in remote schools.
- To increase capacity of staff in Indigenous communities for best outcomes of students.
- To sustain a Catholic Indigenous Leadership Team
 - Build leadership capacity;
 - Increase knowledge of how schools and the system work at a management level.

Overview

- This works consists of several activities focussed on Indigenous staff and community.
- The Catholic Indigenous Leadership team members focus for 2016 is building capacity in project management.
- Consult with Indigenous staff to determine their professional learning needs.
- Indigenous Workforce Manager started in 2016.

Indigenous Catholic Community Schools Team

Vision

Provide specialist teaching support to Indigenous Catholic Community schools

Objectives

- Provide on-site quality teaching support in literacy and numeracy, targeting individual learning needs targeting English as an additional language or dialect learners.
- Provide quality teaching support services to ensure effective learning for students with hearing and other learning difficulties.
- Provide quality teaching support for developing personalised learning plans for more indigenous student.
- Provide quality teaching support for provision of flexible pathways for students to achieve positive post schooling outcomes and to increase Year 12 attainment.

Overview

- There have been two funding agreements for this work.
- As this work is governed by funding agreements CENT does not have the capacity to provide permanent employment for staff.

Asset Management

Vision

The vision of the project is to reduce the burden of asset management on school staff to enable them to focus more time and resources on their primary role of teaching and learning.

Objectives

- Determine an Asset Management System that will be a single place for storing and accessing data.
- Gather current Asset information from all sources.
- Design, configure and Test the Asset Management System appropriately.
- Implement the Asset Management System.
- Train staff in the use and upkeep of the Asset Management System.
- Provide effective project coordination.

Overview

- There has been significant data collated from each participating school site.
- System has been identified and purchased.
- System configuration is nearing completion.

School Projects

St John's Catholic College, Darwin

St John's Catholic College is a boarding school. There are currently 101 Indigenous boarding students from 32 communities which are located in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Student Wellbeing Wrap

Vision

All remote indigenous boarding students have access to a repertoire (or 'wrap') of services to ensure that their level of health and wellbeing allows for optimum participation in all aspects of college curriculum.

Objectives

1. Student transition from community to College

Students are able to transition effectively between home (community) and school. They are 'two-way strong' and have the capacity to switch from home way to college way and back fluently.

2. Mental and emotional health – prevention and intervention

Mental Health issues are addressed promptly and their effective management results in minimum interruption to student engagement in 'their life at our college'.

3. Health promotion and intervention, including disease and injury prevention

The boarding experience for St John's College students to be enjoyable and fulfilling so that these students can fully engage with College activities in the knowledge that they are receiving sound health care and support through prevention programmes.

Overview

- This project has been included in the Projects Evidence document.
- This project was heavily reduced at the cessation of the SSNP funding.
- This projects focus was to enable students to focus on learning.

Student Anchor Partnership

Vision

The vision of the project is to provide an 'anchor' for remote indigenous boarding students so that their experience at school is one that encourages them and provides them with the necessary support structure to complete year 12.

Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

1. **Safety** – to provide a night-time residential safety officer to enable students to feel secure and help keep them safe.
2. **Fun and Engagement** – to provide opportunities for community outreach via enjoyable and safe recreational activities, helping students to engage in college life and the wider community (swimming, cinema, markets, sporting events)
3. **Personal Voice and Community Strength** – to provide offsite residential facilities to establish a gathering site that encourages connecting culture and face-to-face

connectedness; and provides opportunities for students and families to have a voice in the college community.

Overview

- The focus of this project was to provide Indigenous boarding students with an anchor. When students in crisis have a safe haven where they can seek help and advice, and have their own space, they are less likely to run into the unknown. This safe haven can be an anchor for them.
- The project included a number of parallel and interrelated initiatives that focus on the improvement, wellbeing and safety of the students in boarding.

Tiwi Schools

There are two Catholic schools on the Tiwi islands they are Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School and Xavier Catholic College, both schools are adjacent to each other and are located in Wurrumiyanga.

P-13 Education Precinct

Vision

To streamline and improve the delivery of education from Pre-School to Year Thirteen by developing a Catholic Education Precinct and building sustainable systems across the two campuses.

Objectives

- Align the two schools to make one Educational Precinct:
 - Alignment of the schools strategic plans, operational plans, action plans and School Improvement and Renewal Framework processes;
 - Sharing facilities;
 - Joint Branding.
- Implement an organizational structure for the precinct:
 - Review and restructure to meet the needs and priorities of the Catholic Education Precinct;
 - Reorganise operational procedures to promote cross-campus workings.
- Smooth transition for students between campuses:
 - Teaching and Learning;
 - Pastoral Care and Wellbeing.

Overview

- This project included both Tiwi schools.
- Our Tiwi principal of Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School who was pivotal in development of the P-13 project passed away in an accident unexpectedly and this impacted on the project.
- The successes of the project is the open communication between campuses.
- Challenge continues to be the difference in focus of a primary and secondary school.
- Funding for this project ceased in 2013 and was a SSNP project.

Counselling for Health

Vision

The vision of this project is to help staff and students understand that mental health is an essential part of personal health and wellbeing to improve learning outcomes within the school community.

Objectives

- Employ a personal counsellor who will develop a sustainable program for the school for health and wellbeing of staff and students.
- Provide a two week per term counselling experience.
- Monitor student and staff health and wellbeing through both staff and student retention.
- Retention rates increase.
- Improve behavioural and educational outcomes.

Overview

- This project has been included in the Projects Evidence document.
- This project was initially for Xavier Catholic College only however Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School believed it would benefit their school as well so the project was then delivered across both schools.
- This project was a confidential service that both staff and students could access.
- There was initial apprehension from staff however after a semester the service become quite popular and was heavily booked prior to the counsellor arriving in community.
- As Wurrumiyanga was a small community the benefit of a consistent counsellor that did not reside on the island was seen as a great asset.
- This project was funded through SSNP and the project was trailed after the end of the SSNP funding however the ability to offer the counsellor the consistent work meant she was no longer able to continue with the work and the activity ceased at this time.

Japalinga Mob

Vision

This project is to enable students to finish year 12 and to become leaders within the school and the community, by changing the culture in the school and community about expected educational outcomes.

Objectives

Objectives of this project were:

- Higher retention rates to the end of year 12;
- Develop and maintain networks of students;
- Students to be subject to life experiences not available on Tiwi Islands;
- Experience in the areas of art, music, sports, academia and leadership above and beyond curriculum requirements coupled with understanding Tiwi and global cultures.

Overview

- This project had initial issues with students being 'poached' by other schools as they were nearing completion of year 12.
- This project was initially set up as a result of SSNP funding. The school continues the project however it is a smaller project as a result of a reduction in funding.
- The following has been the year 12 attainment rates at Xavier Catholic College. Please note it is not a single project that has allowed for this.
 - 2013 – 6 female students completed their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET);
 - 2014 – 2 female students completed NTCET);
 - 2015 – 1 female student completed their NTCET with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank;
 - 2016 – the College is aiming for 5 female students to graduate;
 - 2017 – the College is aiming for 9 female students to graduate;
 - 2018 – the College is aiming to have a male graduate in this group;

Lhyentye Apurte Catholic School, Santa Teresa.

Rainbows and Revolutions for Our Future

Vision

The vision of this project is for students to have improved educational outcomes through improved social and emotional wellbeing coupled with family and community engagement.

Objectives

1. Increase students' emotional wellbeing.
2. Strong family and community engagement in our school through sustained relationships with each of the families represented by the student population at the school and other community groups.
3. Increase student attendance.
4. Grow students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Overview

- This project has been included in the Projects Evidence document.
- Project has enabled discussions with family members and the school – in particular there was engagement with some males from the community which is something that is uncommon however not to the extent that was sought.

St Joseph's Catholic College, Katherine.

Engaging Urban Students

Vision

This project aims to engage and support Indigenous Urban Students and their families in the school community.

Objectives

1. To support all students to be "learning ready". This means:
 - a. To support the nutrition of students before they attend class (100% self-funded now)
 - b. To support students to purchase uniforms
 - c. To support students with stationery
 - d. To provide transport for students and families
 - e. To provide storage for students' equipment and uniform for all curricular activities
2. To put in place a variety of programs to help to engage the students
3. To build relationships with families and students that feel alienated from schools
4. To support health issues in partnership with local health clinics
5. To support the affirmation of culture

Overview

- This project has been included in the Projects Evidence document.
- There was an increase of Indigenous students attending at the College and the project focus was to welcome and to assist students in being 'school ready'
- Indigenous Education Workers were key in establishing relationships with families and to open dialogue around expectations of Families and the College.

