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Submission No. 104

BY: ATSI4

**Northern Territory Department of Education and Training  
Supplementary questions**

1. What sort of school-retention programs are available to schools in regional or remote areas?

The Department of Education and Training (DET) offers VET (Vocational Education and Training) In The Middle program to middle years students, to provide entry into Certificate 1 Qualifications. Currently this is being offered into 8 Remote Service Delivery sites and will expand to more in Semester 2, 2010.

DET offers the Get VET get a future program, to provide training from Certificate 1 to Certificate 3 qualifications to students in Urban, Remote and Regional areas.

In 2010 DET expanded the successful Work Ready program to three remote communities.

DET coordinate a cross-sectoral team of industry engagement and participation officers and managers to facilitate work placement for students in all Territory schools.

- Can you tell us more about the Alternative Education Provision (pp. 24-25)? How is this funded?

In 2010 the Alternative Education Provision (AEP) team comprises six positions located in Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine. The team works in collaboration with schools and external agencies to provide support and services to youth and their families.

The range of external agencies includes Anglicare, Danila Dilba Indigenous Health Service, Somerville Community Services, Ironbark Employment, Relationships Australia, Headspace, Tamarind Centre, Housing, Police, Lawyers, Diversion, Centrelink (direct access to social worker), NT Families and Children, Royal Darwin Hospital (school and social workers), Smith Family, Family Support Centre (three Authorised Officers).

AEP is funded by the Northern Territory Government through DET. The budget includes personnel and operational costs that provide tutors for students returning to school, workplace trainers and special programs for students that promote engagement through confidence and self esteem building.

- Can you tell us more about the Positive Learning Centres (p. 24)? How are they aligned with the mainstream schooling system?

The Positive Learning Centres (PLC) are part of the Wellbeing and Behaviour Program within DET's Student Services Division, providing support services for primary school students. These are students in the 8-12 age range who exhibit extreme, challenging behaviours, do not have an identified disability and have been assessed as likely to benefit from intensive positive behavioural interventions. PLC staff members provide services that include:

- in-school support to assist with case managing students in order to develop positive behaviour plans and interventions and ensure minimal disengagement from school

- involvement in the PLC programs away from the home school for an individually assessed program targeting the development of positive behaviours. This will include designated time within home schools with PLC support.

The programs available within the PLC are based on modules promoting specific positive behaviours such as resolving conflicts, being a leader, taking risks. The proposed learning outcomes and programs are aligned with the EsseNTial Learnings component of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework and assessed accordingly.

Each student is assessed on entry into the PLC program and an individual plan developed. This is regularly reviewed during the course of the PLC program.

Students enter the program through a nomination process forwarded from their school. Each application is assessed and reviewed by a governance panel comprising three school principals and Student Services Division.

2. What strategies does the Department of Education and Training have for recruiting and training more Indigenous teachers?

The DET More Indigenous Teachers program recruits Indigenous Territorians hoping to complete a Bachelor of Education. DET offers three types of programs that provide financial support for full-time studies.

- CADETSHIPS (20) – linked with the DEEWR national cadetship support program (Indigenous Cadetship Support)
- SCHOLARSHIPS (14) – two of which are specifically allocated for people from remote locations under the Wesley Lanhapuy scholarships
- FELLOWSHIPS (6) – offered to current DET employees.

Internally through close networking between Remote Workforce Development and the CDEP transition program there is monitoring and support of Indigenous learners who are studying at certificate level eg Assistant teacher completing a Certificate III in Classroom Support. This has meant that for the first time in many years there is a clear pathway from certificate level teaching studies to higher education level and becoming a qualified teacher.

3. Can you tell us about post-school pathways to employment that are available to NT Aboriginal communities?

TRY (training for remote youth) funding applications are sought from communities for specific programs for disengaged youth .The program funds both accredited and non-accredited training.

FRF (flexible response funding) applications are sought from communities for specific programs. The program funds both accredited and non-accredited training.

Pre Employment/Pre-apprenticeship program. This training is specifically targeted at direct employment pathways .The program funds both accredited and non-accredited training.

4. In your view, is the Family Responsibilities Commission project in Cape York a possible option for the NT?

The Families Responsibilities Commission (FRC) is an initiative designed to restore the social norms in four remote communities in Cape York. It uses community elders to review cases and conduct hearings for recipients of welfare payments on matters of school enrolment and attendance, child safety, court cases and breaches of tenancy agreements.

In the NT the Interagency Collaboration Panel is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Education and Training, Police, Justice and Health and Families. Representatives from these agencies make referrals to the panel. Children and families at risk are identified through the day to day business of the agencies involved in the panel.

5. What has been the impact of the changes to Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) on training opportunities for young Indigenous people in both remote and urban areas?

There has not been a significant change in the access of young Indigenous people to VET training as a result of the changes. The majority of requests for this training have been for full certificate qualifications not skill sets. There has been an increase in requests for full qualifications from reformed CDEP programs. This appears to be driven by Key Performance Indicators and program policies of the CDEP program providers. Concerns have been raised that there is no direct pathway to employment through some of the qualifications being undertaken.

6. What sort of collaboration does your Department have with other departments to jointly address the high levels of incarceration and recidivism of young Indigenous people and to ensure positive school engagement and retention?

- For example with the Department of Health and Families to address the impact of alcohol and substance abuse?
- With other departments to ensure appropriate health care, adequate accommodation and return to school or work after their release from detention?

These items were covered in the response earlier this year, forwarded to you by the NT Department of Justice.

7. Does your department develop workready programs to operate with detention centres and/or businesses? Are any tailored to be culturally supportive of Indigenous prisoners? What types of skills are taught in these programs?

Not directly, however Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education uses recurrent funds to provide service to prisoners.

In 2009/10 DET provided the Department of Justice with recurrent funding on \$1 million for training of prisoners.

8. Are teachers and other employees of your department trained to detect signs of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, mental health issues, or hearing loss?
- Are you able to tell us how widespread these disorders are amongst students in the Northern Territory?
  - What strategies are in place to respond to students who may be affected by these disorders?

#### *Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder*

This is a difficult disability to diagnose, especially given the need for sensitivity in relation to assessing the mother's usage of alcohol during pregnancy. Anecdotally it is understood that the incidence in the Northern Territory is quite low and whilst DET does not specifically train its staff in relation to this disorder, its staff do look for behavioural signs that might be indicative of its presence. If these signs are noticed then referrals to a paediatrician are recommended. DET can assist with the development of Education Adjustment Plans for such students, and also Individual Behaviour Plans if required.

#### *Mental Health*

DET employs educational psychologists, school counsellors, positive behaviour officers and child protection education trainers, all of whom have some impact on the development of mental health skills amongst teachers. DET also supports the MindMatters and Kidsmatter initiatives. In recognition of the significance of the issue of mental health DET has recently created a senior position – Manager Mental Health and Child Protection – to oversee and better coordinate efforts in this area.

#### *Hearing Loss*

The DET Hearing Team comprises five education advisors who provide services to schools across the NT. Services focus on conductive hearing loss (CHL) and sensor neural hearing loss (SNHL).

It is estimated that less than 2% of children have SNHL while as many as 8 out of 10 Indigenous children in the Northern Territory could have Otitis Media and an associated CHL during the school year.

Services to schools include teachers' professional learning activities, consultations with students to assess communication and access needs, technical support for sound systems, Educational Adjustment Plan (EAP) development for individual students, and the development of whole of school approaches to minimise the impact of Otitis Media, ear health preventive strategies and communication strategies.