



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Parliament House
State Square
Darwin NT 0800
minister.uibo@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: 08 8936 5529
Facsimile: 08 8928 6517

Mr Andrew Laming MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
ee.reps@aph.gov.au

Andrew
Dear Mr Laming

Thank you for your letter of 13 February seeking responses to questions regarding the inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments. Please find attached the Northern Territory's response to the Committee's questions (Attachment A refers).

Yours sincerely

SELENA UIBO
03 MAR 2020

QUESTIONS FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#	MEMBER	QUESTION	NORTHERN TERRITORY RESPONSE
1	Laming	State/territory initiatives to prevent the decline in STEM (esp females.)	<p>The Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education has a number of initiatives to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in schools, with a focus on encouraging those students who are statistically less likely to participate in STEM related activities.</p> <p>The NT Government has committed \$39 million to develop Darwin Middle and High Schools as the leading STEAM schools in the NT. This is in addition to the \$10 million investment in the STEAM centre at Taminmin College in Darwin's rural area. This significant capital investment provides the space and resources for students to actively engage in innovative education and is available to all enrolled students.</p> <p>The NT also participates in the collaborative actions for sustainable change under the national STEM strategy. This includes the department's work in the sySTEMic program, which focuses on encouraging and supporting young people from groups that are underrepresented in STEM, such as Aboriginal students, women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This initiative is a partnership between Engineers Australia - Northern and the department that establishes long-term partnerships between industry, schools, and vocational and tertiary education providers. The program aims to increase the number of young people achieving a post-school STEM related qualification, while helping to prepare students for the world beyond school at a time when they are making decisions about their career paths. Program highlights include 50 per cent female and 25 per cent Aboriginal representation in the program, and the development of contextualised subjects that allow Year 10 students to gain credits towards their Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCET).</p> <p>As part of its <i>STEM in the Territory Strategy 2018-2022</i>, the department has introduced compulsory coding training into primary and secondary schools, including in some remote and very remote schools. This includes implementing a digital technologies curriculum, providing resources, and focusing on teacher professional development. For students in remote and very remote schools, STEM subjects are offered as part of the Employment Pathways program, where students can participate in a digital technology unit of work introducing basic coding through use of robotics and drones. The department also works in partnership with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the Digital Technologies in Focus Project, which supports the development of whole-school plans for the implementation of Digital Technologies.</p>

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2	Laming	State/territory initiatives to monitor/manage social issues associated with younger students entering high school a year earlier.	<p>All students, including those transitioning from primary to middle or high schools, can access the services of school counsellors. School counsellors work with students, school staff, other support agencies and communities to promote strong, healthy relationships that are essential for both academic and social development.</p> <p>NT Government schools are also encouraged to deliver the NT Social and Emotional Resources in schools, which are based on the Victorian Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Curriculum. The resources are contextualised for all stages of learning and cover key topics affecting students' social and emotional wellbeing, including emotional literacy, personal strengths, positive coping, problem solving, stress management, help seeking, gender and identity, and positive gender relationships.</p> <p>Students living in remote and very remote Aboriginal communities have the option of continuing their schooling in their community, moving to a regional high school with residential facilities, or attending a boarding school. The Transition Support Unit (TSU) supports students and families in determining the best option for them in their circumstances. For those students who go on to attend a regional high school with residential facilities or a boarding school, the following support is available through the TSU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitation of pre and post-enrolment student and family visits to the school • help with travel to and from school • help with school uniform and other school materials • help to access any financial assistance that may be available including scholarships.
3	Laming	Proportion of budget devoted to staff / salaries and in class teaching salaries.	<p>The NT has 108 government schools located in remote and very remote areas.</p> <p>In 2019, the overall proportion of total school resourcing budget that was spent on employment costs was 81per cent. This includes all staff, predominately classroom teachers and assistant teachers, but does not take into account any costs or services charged centrally and undertaken on behalf of schools.</p>

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5	Laming	Number of home schooled children by age and proportion of total.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age (years)</th> <th>Number of Home School students in each age year (2019)</th> <th>Home School students in each age year as a proportion of the total number of NT students</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>6</td><td>5</td><td>0.1%</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>12</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>10</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>15</td><td>0.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>12</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>9</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>16</td><td>0.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>10</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>12</td><td>0.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>8</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>9</td><td>0.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>5</td><td>0.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>3</td><td>0.7%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>126</td> <td>0.3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age (years)	Number of Home School students in each age year (2019)	Home School students in each age year as a proportion of the total number of NT students	6	5	0.1%	7	12	0.3%	8	10	0.3%	9	15	0.4%	10	12	0.3%	11	9	0.3%	12	16	0.5%	13	10	0.3%	14	12	0.4%	15	8	0.3%	16	9	0.4%	17	5	0.3%	18	3	0.7%	Total	126	0.3%		
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6	Laming	Any work around changing semesters to increase mid year breaks by a week.	<p>The NT has a term-break pattern of one week (mid-Semester 1), three weeks (mid-year), two weeks (mid-Semester 2) and six weeks (December-January).</p> <p>This pattern commenced in 2018, following an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. This option was implemented to support improvement to educational outcomes and to ensure a school calendar that suited the NT context. In 2020, the department will undertake a review to inform school term date patterns for 2023 to 2027.</p> <p>Remote schools can apply to the Chief Executive to vary their term dates which, if endorsed, must then be approved by the Minister. The purpose of this arrangement is to ensure that remote schools can deliver an education program that maximises student engagement and suits the unique context of their community. This process is driven by local aspirations and involves extensive consultation with all stakeholders, including community representatives. This process is reviewed regularly.</p> <p>An example of this is at Gunbalanya School in West Arnhem Land which has operated on a unique term date pattern since 2012. This includes a shorter three week break over Christmas, and a longer six week break in the middle of the year. This suits the community's unique context, as more families and students are in community over the Christmas period when the road is generally impassable. Equally, a longer holiday period in the middle of the year during the dry season meets community needs as many families are out of community (and students are unable to attend school) over this period.</p> <p>Lajamanu School has also trialled a unique term date pattern in 2016 and 2017; however, following a review of the trial it was determined that the school would revert to the standard calendar from 2018.</p>
7	Sharkie	Role of technology to ensure remote and regional young people access educational opportunities (eg video conferencing) and funding provided.	<p>In 2019-20, \$11M was invested in distance education to ensure that every child, regardless of where they live, can access quality education services. Distance education is provided by the NT School of Distance Education, Katherine School of the Air and Alice Springs School of the Air. The School of the Air model includes online interactive distance learning lessons (both group and individual) that provides students a feeling of inclusion and connectedness. Students also receive printed materials, activities and books, home tutors, home visits and an 'in-school' week per term.</p> <p>Work is currently underway to develop a Remote Virtual College to improve access, collaboration and learning continuity in a range of subjects to remote and highly mobile students, with \$2 million budgeted for its development.</p>