

**1. In lobbying for adequate funding and effective service agreements, what are NTCOSS's priority reforms that it is taking to governments, and how are these reforms in line with self-determination?**

In regard to adequate and appropriate long term funding models, NTCOSS is advocating to governments (primarily the NTG), to cease application of the efficiency dividend, provide an immediate increase of 5.1% in funding to community services to cover the Fair Work wage increase, and index future funding agreements to CPI.

In addition to this, noting the high level of need across Territory communities, seen through poor outcomes under the social determinants of health (high rates of violence, child removal, education outcomes, hospitalisations, poverty, homelessness etc.), for funding to be delivered to jurisdictions to meet need, not on population size.

Funding agreements must also include embedded, adequate resourcing for appropriate monitoring and evaluation to assist with gathering data and improving practice. Data and evaluation are critical to long term to success of programs and is currently lacking across the Territory (and other jurisdictions).

NTCOSS supports the APONT partnership principles, and Closing the Gap. Co-design, community led models of service development, in line with the saying 'with us, not to us', should be cornerstones of program development. NTCOSS supports *makarrata* and the Voice to Parliament as a mechanism to improve Aboriginal people's and communities input on issues and programs that impact them and provider greater agency and opportunity for self-determination.

**2. In what ways do you think the NT Government could improve its community engagement? How could communities be given greater influence over policy and program decisions that impact their lives?**

Contracts awarded for service delivery in community must have input from Aboriginal people within the community. Aboriginal community members should be part of that contract process, who is appropriate to deliver services, what services are needed, are the programs going to benefit the community, are they being delivered in a way that is appropriate and effective? Include local Aboriginal people in the interview panel to make sure the best people are delivering services.

Creating greater opportunity for input, longer consultation times on key policy and program changes and resourcing adequate consultation (as well as remunerating communities for their time, expertise and knowledge) would assist with this.

Again, ensuring that when programs are introduced, they have appropriate monitoring and evaluation components, in addition to independent evaluations of government and NGO programs and initiatives, will help create an evidence base for what works (acknowledging that different communities have different needs and a one-size fits all approach does not work).

**3. How are you supporting the community controlled sector in incorporating Indigenous governance processes while still aligning with regulatory requirements?**

NTCOSS supports the work of the Aboriginal Peaks in the Territory leading in this space. As principles, NTCOSS is vocal in our support for Closing the Gap and the APONT partnership principles.

**4. What could be done better to improve the capacity of the community controlled sector, particularly in relation to governance, infrastructure, accountability and auditing requirements?**

These matters must be considered in the funding so that organisations are adequately resourced. Please see response under question 1.

**5. Can you outline how you think the 'effective enrolment' model has impacted remote and regional schools in the NT?**

This has resulted in the schools servicing the most disadvantaged communities receiving dismal funding. Schools in remote communities with low attendance rates need enough funding so that they can meet the needs of the kids in the community which can be complex and challenging. A model focused on attendance and curriculum outcomes does not demonstrate understanding of the diverse and complex environments many children and families come from. Creating further barriers for accessing quality education, that result in lack of resourcing to schools who most need it (in addition to innovative and adaptive learning models) will not create better outcomes.

The NTG, for example, has released a number of frameworks and guidelines around trauma informed practice and other initiatives over the years, however the implementation of these things in schools is not uniform. Ensuring all schools are resourced appropriately to implement best practice models, designed in collaboration with school communities and families, in agile settings that meet the needs of the school community, is critical.

The attached paper, while prepared in 2019, relates to the above and the below questions relating to education outcomes and may be of interest to the Committee.

**6. Given this model has disproportionately impacted the most disadvantaged remote communities, resulting in devastating funding cuts, how has this policy impacted on the rights of children in these communities, particularly their right to an education?**

It means that the education delivered in disadvantaged remote communities is of a lesser standard than education delivered in urban centres – not because of the efforts of the teachers but because the schools are not being equipped to deliver proper education. When schools are not properly resourced, kids are going to become more disengaged. There is a strong correlation between disengagement from school and ultimately entering the criminal justice system.

**7. What do you think should be done to address schools being sent on a 'downward spiral', as one teacher from a remote community has put it?**

Remote schools need more funding. They also need local Aboriginal teachers and bilingual programs. Children should be able to learn in their first language. Communities must be empowered and resourced to drive school engagement campaigns and local role modelling.

Perhaps the National Curriculum needs to be looked at in the context of remote schools. Does the National Curriculum meet the needs of remote Aboriginal children or is it setting them up to fail as it may not address their language or cultural needs.

Creating greater opportunity for programs to partner in school settings, and moving away from a purely curriculum based educational focus (or attendance), that provides holistic, therapeutic, culturally appropriate education settings, with a trauma informed approach implemented in practice across all schools and not just identified in frameworks, would result in greater education outcomes and community buy in to educational institutions.

Noting that many of the schools in remote communities are not public institutions, looking at how funding is prioritised so such schools and areas is important.

NT COGSO, the peak parent body for public education, providing advocacy and representation for families, students and school communities, may be able to contribute to this area, also.

**8. If communities were properly resourced to support the learning needs of their children, in what ways might these resources be used to achieve better outcomes for students?**

Resources for communities should be developed in consultation, and based on the above mentioned principles of self-determination and co-design. How any such resources could be used would differ between communities and the identified needs.

Ideally, increased resourcing and access to education, with a holistic approach that includes families within the school environment, would result in not only greater long term outcomes for education but under the other social determinants of health, also.