



Submission to Joint Select Committee on **Northern Australia**

Terms of Reference:

Identify the critical economic and social infrastructure needed to support the long term growth of the region, and ways to support planning and investment in that infrastructure.

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An Anglican and Uniting Church College



 **Kormilda
College**
Towards tomorrow

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March 2014

Kormilda College Mission Statement

*Kormilda College, from its **Christian foundation and commitment to excellence**, seeks to **inspire** its students to be **life-long learners** who act with **compassion and justice** through their **understanding of others**, and who develop the **wisdom and courage** to shape the future.*

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1. Introduction

Darwin has long held the desire to have its own prestigious, top of the market education facility, attractive not only to Territory students, but also the Northern Australian region and its nearby international neighbours, some as close as less than one hour flying time to Darwin.

The Darwin International Grammar School concept was first raised in the early 1980's when a group of leading local businessmen pursued the dream of a premium, private school that they saw was an important foundation not only for their own children, but as a lasting legacy for future generations. They tirelessly lobbied the NT Government for a site at Berrimah farm and assistance in making this happen. However, the cost structure in getting this privately funded project off the ground proved too great and it was reluctantly abandoned.

Today, Darwin is enjoying exponential growth largely underpinned by the oil & gas industries. This growth has seen both the population and demand for social infrastructure including housing and education facilities rise considerably. Presently there is no education facility within the rapid high-density housing growth of Darwin's CBD peninsula.

In tandem to this, Northern Australia including the Territory, is also presented with one of its most challenging policy reforms – the long-term planning of critical social infrastructure to meet its commitment to closing the gap in Indigenous Education. Currently almost half of the Northern Territory's student cohort is Indigenous with education outcomes falling well short of acceptable standards. Northern Territory Education Minister Peter Chandler was recently quoted:

“The Territory cannot hope to fully realise its potential in the North Australian century without significant changes in the way education is delivered to this important and growing portion of the student body”.

Kormilda is the only boarding school in Northern Australia with full accreditation by the Council of International Schools, has four formal partnership schools in Indonesia, and is the only NT school to offer the globally acclaimed International Baccalaureate Diploma. It has long held a reputation as a 'light house' school that has yielded a strong track record of outstanding graduate outcomes and impressive ATAR results.

Kormilda also enjoys a strong working partnership with Charles Darwin University through a number of programs including their own High Achievers Academy and HEPPP (Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program) program assisting Indigenous students transition into higher education.

Kormilda has a boarding facility of over 250 places with capacity to expand. Additionally, it has a large outdoor campus with sports ovals, gymnasium, basketball courts, main halls and specialised classrooms that include a full-purpose music room, VET facilities and much more.

With the long-term growth of the Northern Australian region in mind, Kormilda College recognises a synergy between Territory and Federal Governments and our Strategic Directions (attached). The College is in position not only to engage with our Asian neighbours, but to provide significant high quality education to both mainstream and Indigenous cohorts. There is potential to be recognised as an innovative, leading education provider to a national and global audience.

2. Background

a) Kormilda College

Kormilda College is an Independent school and a company limited by guarantee operated under the auspices of its two members, the Anglican and Uniting Churches. It educates both Abstudy government funded remote area Indigenous boarders (non-fee paying) and fee-paying day students from the greater Darwin region.

Kormilda today educates over 750 students including 230 Indigenous boarders from remote area communities, offering pathways in VET, NTCET and is the only school in the Northern Territory to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma as an internationally recognised qualification in Years 11 & 12.

b) History

In 1989 the Northern Territory Government, who had previously operated Kormilda as a hostel for remote area Indigenous students, approached the Anglican Church to undertake its governance.

RT Rev Bishop Wood, head of the Northern Territory Diocese at the time recalls:

“Central to the Church’s decision to take over Kormilda College was a conversation with Gumbuli of Ngukurr who commented that ‘My children have no choice’ – meaning that at the time his children did not have a choice and he thought they should have. This is a senior Aboriginal elder’s clear recognition that education was central to the well-being of Aboriginal children; that Aboriginal children had to be given the choice of being involved in the education process.”

Leveraging off the notion of ‘choice’ the College developed as a significant provider of Independent education to Territorians.

c) Development

As Darwin has grown and developed, so too has the provision of education choice for parents and children.

Kormilda has responded to the diverse needs of Darwin’s population through the expanded educational delivery in VET and the International Baccalaureate.

Our current Strategic Directions, relevant to this submission, include:

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Kormilda will grow its reputation as a leading provider of Indigenous education and will actively promote cross-cultural engagement in a spirit of reconciliation.

INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

Kormilda will take advantage of Darwin's unique positioning as Australia's gateway with Asia. Each student will be encouraged to connect with the global community.

d) Recent Times

Kormilda College staff are very experienced in managing the educational needs of remote area Indigenous students. Using a data-driven decision-making model, pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning are diverging at Kormilda College along the lines of delivery and current educational needs of the students – currently instructional pedagogy is either inquiry based and Direct Instruction. Mainstream students are engaged and developed better through the approach of inquiry based learning (see International Baccalaureate Primary, Middle and Diploma, and aspects of the Australian curriculum); whilst students at academic risk, or with limited previous exposure to school or below benchmark levels of literacy and numeracy are better served by Direct Instruction (refer Noel Pearson in Cape York and Charter Schools in the USA).

Increasingly, Kormilda is operating two distinct schools, with two distinct cohorts of students requiring two distinct pedagogical and behaviour management approaches. One size does not fit all.

3. Considerations

a) The Coalition's Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia

This provides an opportunity to leverage off Darwin's location and create state-of-the-art education infrastructure, resourced by an internationally accredited and Indigenous specialist education provider to cater to the surrounding region.

b) (Draft) Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory, Wilson 2014

The review drafts a number of key recommendations. Those that may be directly linked with this submission include:

- Recognise the differing capacities and circumstances of town and bush schools and vary implementation requirements to reflect these differences, including mandating evidence based approaches for bush schools.
- Maintain Families as First Teachers (FaFT) in its current form pending data from the evaluation, consider additional target communities, improve implementation where weaknesses are identified and improve the training profile of Indigenous staff.
- Define appropriate phonemic awareness skills and teaching strategies and implement them in pre-schools.
- Offer secondary education for bush students in towns, with students accommodated in residential facilities

c) The Coalition's Policy for Schools: Students First

This provides the macro view for the way forward for Kormilda College. The Better Schools Funding arrangement provides financial incentive to maximise resources where it is most needed. For reference specifically:

- Independent public schools and greater community engagement
- Flexible Literacy learning for remote primary schools
- Improve the take up of foreign languages
- Practical skills for new teachers
- Flexible pathways into teaching

4. Way Forward

Given the above considerations Kormilda College could spilt into two constituent schools, controlled as a system (or system-like) created by the Uniting and Anglican Churches, on separately located campuses – a Day school, the Darwin International Grammar School, catering for students with a focus on a recognised international, high quality educational preparation program for university, and the Kormilda Trade Training Academy of Excellence with a specialist focus on Intensive English and Mathematics classes and post-school further learning or job readiness. The constituent schools would cater for their student cohorts using a different pedagogical approach to achieve an outcome focussed end.

This model would necessarily incorporate into the Kormilda Trade Training Academy of Excellence the current (or expanded) Boarding Academy on the current Kormilda College site.

The College has completed high level strategic planning on these concepts and is prepared to release further information as is required. This submission is made in order to flag the College's desire to enter into discussions with relevant department representatives.

8. Advantages

Everyone wins:

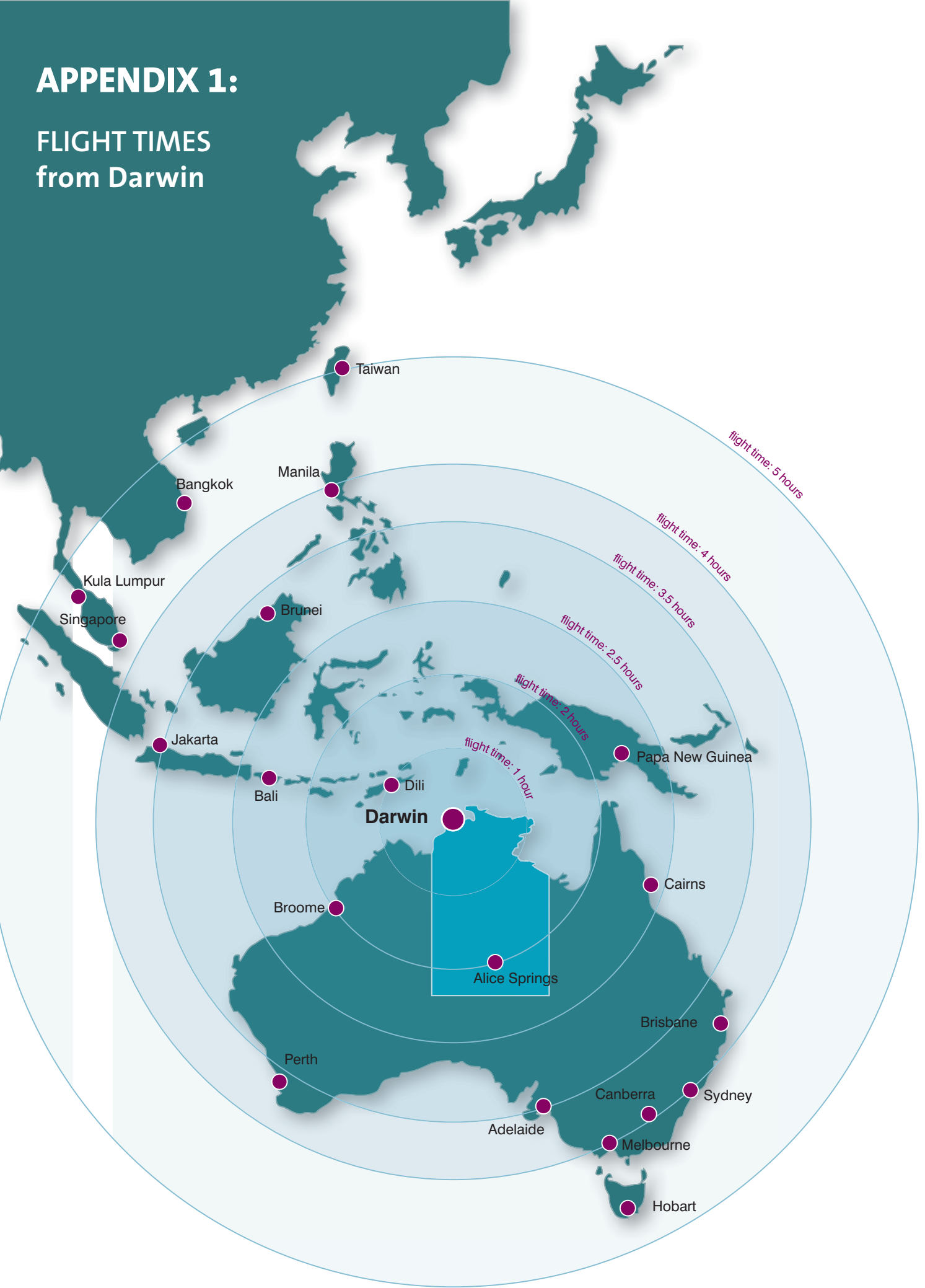
- a) Northern Australia gains an internationally accredited school of considerable standing, with full boarding facilities available and close links with four Indonesian schools in close proximity to its Asian neighbours
- b) The Northern Territory Government aligns itself with key policy targets of the Federal Coalition
- c) Northern Australia gains a specialist Indigenous Education boarding facility delivering the successful Direct Instruction model akin to Cape York, and meets expectations in delivering real change and outcomes for the future of its bush constituents.
- d) Remote Indigenous students and partner communities have a strengthened, specialised and tailored educational pathway, using our latest understanding of pedagogy and behaviour management, combined with a range of skillsets offered through VET – useful to their communities or potential employers and positioned as a Centre of Excellence in trade training
- e) The Northern Territory Government can enact a significant finding from the Review of Indigenous Education (Wilson, 2014) in providing boarding pathways for Indigenous secondary students in Darwin
- g) Current Kormilda College is able to educationally reconcile the two cohorts of students successfully, without losing its heritage in providing educational opportunity through ‘choice’.

Appendice:

- Appendix 1:** Darwin/Asia Proximity map
- Appendix 2:** NT Population demographics: Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin
- Appendix 3:** NT Minister for Education, Peter Chandler Media Release: Indigenous Education Review 7/2/14

APPENDIX 1:

FLIGHT TIMES from Darwin



APPENDIX 2:

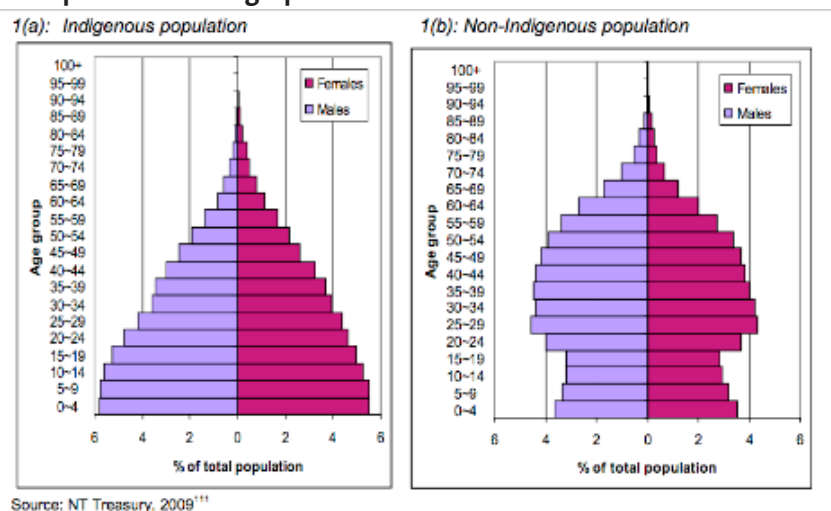
NT Student Cohort 2009: Non-Indigenous & Indigenous

Kormilda College offers up to 230 boarding spaces for remote Indigenous students and is the largest provider of secondary education to this demographic in Northern Australia.

Remote and very remote Australian Indigenous children form a higher proportion of the student cohort in the Northern Territory by comparison to neighbouring Queensland, WA, or SA.

Silburn, S.R., Nutton, G., McKenzie, J.W., and Landrigan, M. 2011, "Early years English language acquisition and instructional approaches for Aboriginal students with home languages other than English: A systematic review". 2011. Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin.

NT Population Demographics:



The projected population growth of working age Indigenous people is likely to present significant challenges in terms of the opportunities available for employment, further education and social participation. Just keeping pace with the demographic trends for growth in the young adult Indigenous population will require a significant expansion of the number of jobs potentially available. Improving the rates of workforce participation of Indigenous people in the NT is also challenged by the low levels of functional literacy and numeracy of many Indigenous school leavers which limit their capacity for taking up the work and educational opportunities which may be available. It is also impeded by the low completion rates of vocational and adult educational training courses for Indigenous students.

Silburn, S.R., Robinson, G., Arney, F., Johnstone, K., McGuinness, K.. 2011 "Early Childhood Development in the NT: Issues to be addressed". Early Childhood Series No. 1. 2011. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

The analysis provided above speaks of the importance and significance of the work that Kormilda College is leading in the Northern Territory.

APPENDIX 3:

NT Education Minister Media Release: 7 February 2014



PETER CHANDLER MLA | Member for **BRENNAN**
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

MEDIA RELEASE

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REVIEW

7 February 2014

A draft report into the state of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory has been released today, recommending a comprehensive overhaul of bush schooling to give our children a chance at a better future.

“This report is the most thorough review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory for more than 15 years. It describes an education system that is currently failing to meet students’ most basic needs and is in urgent need of reform,” Education Minister Peter Chandler said.

“The Territory cannot hope to fully realise its potential in the North Australian century without significant changes in the way education is delivered to this important and growing portion of the student body.

“These students are the Territory’s future and the system is leaving them behind.

“Independent education expert Bruce Wilson has spent the past six months assessing the education outcomes being delivered to Indigenous students and whether the model being used is appropriate. His findings are unequivocal.

“The report paints a deeply concerning picture about the system’s inability to provide the best quality education to our children.

“We are determined to give our kids the best chance in life and it is clear that despite the huge investments of recent years, the current system is not delivering that.

“The literacy and numeracy results for remote Indigenous students still fall well below the results of students in our major centres. But tellingly, they also fall well below the result of students in similar schools in remote communities in other jurisdictions.”

The draft review is especially critical of the delivery of secondary education in very remote schools noting the declining number of NTCET completions from the 47 schools offering the program.

“Secondary education in the bush was the flagship education policy of the former Labor Government but sadly with just four completions in 2011 and eight in 2012, it is clear those good intentions haven’t yielded acceptable results,” Mr Chandler said.

“This government’s approach to education will be results driven, if we don’t aim for the best results we’re cheating students out of a better future.”

The 37 recommendations of the draft report focus on early years programs, literacy in primary schools, the delivery of secondary education, the structure of the department, attendance, community engagement, student wellbeing and behaviour management, roles and responsibilities of teachers and principals, community involvement, workforce planning and funding arrangements.

Bruce Wilson has scheduled a comprehensive program of public consultation across the Territory to get feedback before the final report is completed and submitted to government between April and June.

All interested parties are encouraged to make written submissions or attend one of the public meetings planned across the Territory over the coming weeks.

“Once finalised, this report will be one of the most important policy papers considered by government and I want to bring the community with us as we begin the process of change. The future of the Territory and our children depends on us getting this right,” Mr Chandler said.

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WORLD really
is at **YOUR** feet!

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