Report on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory

Charles Darwin
UNIVERSITY
Innovation in Education

Northern Territory Government
Department of Employment, Education and Training

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
for Secondary Education
in the Northern Territory

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The Hon Clare Martin MLA

Chief Minister

Northern Territory Government

Parliament House

Darwin NT 0800

Dear Chief Minister

On behalf of the review team, I am pleased to submit the Report on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory. This report is the outcome of an extensive review of schools and discussions with a whole range of people, but particularly the young people secondary education serves.

In our deliberations we put the needs of Territory young people at the core of our thinking. This approach led us to question much that is currently available, and to propose changes that we believe will improve learning and life chances for those engaging in secondary education.

We had the fullest cooperation in our task from all segments of the Northern Territory. The number of submissions and consultations from such a small population is a tribute to the overall interest people in the Territory have in education. The support we had from the Department of Employment, Education and Training at all levels was outstanding, and particularly the Chief Executive, Peter Plummer, who made sure there were no impediments to our task. The non-Government sector, too, was very supportive, and gave us the benefit of their wide educational experience.

We particularly appreciated the opportunity to have discussions with the young people in schools, and with those who teach or otherwise work with them. All we met were frank in their comments, with a clear aim to bring about improvement through the review processes.

From our conversations, we believe that the Territory is ready for change and many of the insights we had and solutions we propose are based on what people said to us. Even so, there is much to

be done, particularly for people on remote communities. To bring about the changes, resources will be needed, but in many ways more important is the need to build capacity and capability in those who are to work with young people and take secondary education forward. The review and this report are seen as a first step to initiate a process of ongoing change in the system.

On behalf of the team I would like to thank you for the opportunity you gave us to undertake this review, especially since the quality of secondary education is so critical to the Territory's future.

Yours sincerely

Gregor Ramsey
Principal Consultant
December 2003

Report on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory

Acknowledgements

The preparation of this report was a sound example of teamwork. Led by Gregor Ramsey as Principal Consultant, the team consisted of three distinct groups

- Charles Darwin University (CDU) with Greg Hill as group leader, and MaryAnn Bin-Sallik, Ian Falk, Neville Grady, Margaret Landrigan, and Wendy Watterston
- the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) with Rita Henry as group leader, Trish Hansen, and Annette Jamieson
- external consultants with Gregor Ramsey as group leader, Liz Wauchope, and Metta Young.

Four members of the team were based in Alice Springs, while the others were in Darwin. For most members of the team this was a part-time activity, and considerable dedication was required to finish such a wide-ranging task on time.

The team appreciated advice provided by Linda Ford, Tanyah Nasir and Ruth Wallace who were Indigenous support staff at Charles Darwin University at the time. We also had valuable input gathered by Steve McWilliams from a group of young people who either were planning to or had dropped out of school or were engaged in activities beyond school.

A Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Executive of DEET, Peter Plummer, guided us to be sure we delivered our findings on time, within budget, and fulfilled the requirements of our Terms of Reference. We appreciated their guidance. The members of the Steering Committee are listed in Appendix B.
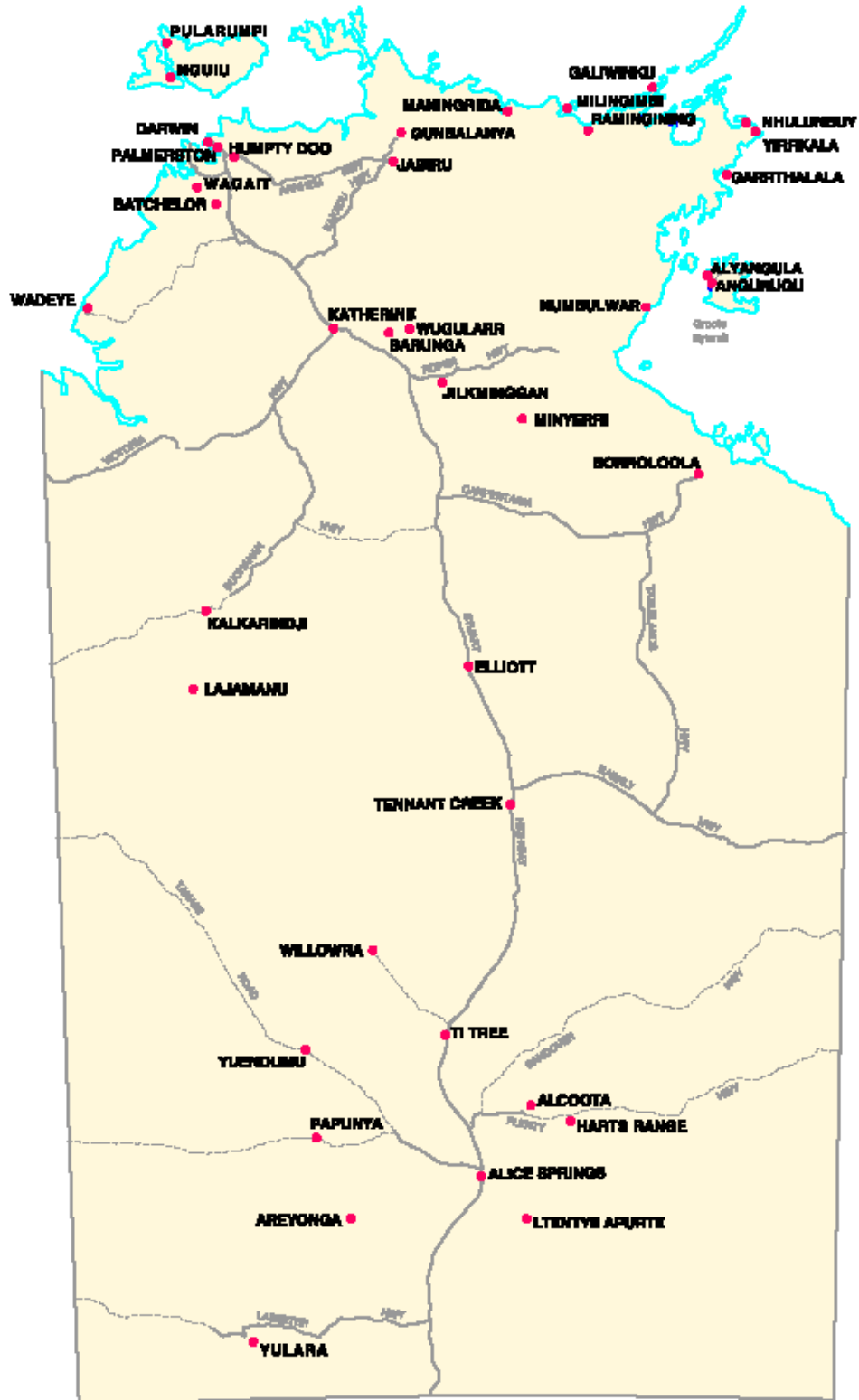
A Reference Group of stakeholders chaired by Brian Devlin, Chair of the Education Advisory Council, also provided advice. The members of the Reference Group are listed in Appendix C. Their written report on issues was much appreciated by the team, as were the discussions that were held with them.

We received objective advice on our report and recommendations when they were in draft form from three external people engaged to assist: John Moore of Erebus Consulting, Graeme Speedy, Adjunct Professor at Southern Cross University, and Vivian Eyers, an independent consultant. Their advice was essential to finalising our work.

We had regular discussions with the DEET Executive, and we were given ready access to information at all levels. Both the Government and non-Government education sectors, the Australian Education Union NT (AEU NT) and the NT Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) were uniformly helpful in supporting the review.

We had nothing but positive support for what we were doing from across the whole NT community, but particularly from schools. We were given access to students, teachers, support staff, principals, parents, school councils, and all were frank with their advice and suggestions for change. We particularly appreciated the opportunity to talk with young people from all parts of the Territory. Generally, their positive approach to life and the opportunities in front of them made us feel that the Territory will be in good hands as we move into the 21st Century.

Locations visited by the review team in the Northern Territory

PULARUMPI
NGUIU
GALIWINKU
MAMINGRIDA
MILINGIMBI
RAMINGINING
NHULUNBUY
GUNBALANYA
YIRRKALA
DARWIN
PALMERSTON
HUMPTY DOO
JABIRU
GAPUWIYAK
WAGAIT
BATCHELOR
ALYANGULA
ANGURUGU
WADEYE
KATHERINE
WUGULARR
NUMBULWAR
BARUNGA
Groote
Eylandt
JILKMINGGAN
MINYERRI
BORROLOOLA
KALKARINDJI
ELLIOTT
LAJAMANU
TENNANT CREEK
WILLOWRA
TI TREE
YUENDUMU
ALCOOTA
PAPUNYA
HARTS RANGE
ALICE SPRINGS
AREYONGA
LTENTYE APURTE
YULARA

100   0   100   200   300   400
Kilometres

List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACER	Australian Council of Educational Research
AHC	Annual Hours Curriculum
AIEW	Aboriginal & Islander Education Worker
AITAP	Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program
ASLC	Alice Springs Language Centre
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARO	Aboriginal Resource Officer
ASSOA	Alice Springs School of the Air
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CAC	Community Access Centre
CARIHPC	Central Australian Regional Indigenous Health Planning Committee
CAT	Centre for Appropriate Technology
CDEP	Commonwealth Development Employment Projects
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CEC	Community Education Centre
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLC	Central Land Council
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COGSO	Council of Government School Organisations
CSB	Curriculum Services Branch
DCDSCA	Department of Community Development Sport and Cultural Affairs
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DK CRC	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
DPC	Desert People's Centre
EAC	Education Advisory Council
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
ECEF	Enterprise and Career Education Foundation
ESL	English as a Second Language
HESS	Higher Education Selection Subjects
HoP	Head of Precinct
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

HRSB	Human Resource Services Branch
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IDL	Interactive Distance Learning
IHoP	Interim Head of Precinct
IP	Internet Provider
ISA	Inclusion Support Assistant
IT	Information Technology
ITESS	Indigenous Teacher Education Salary Scheme
L&N	Literacy and Numeracy
LATIS	Learning and Technology in Schools
LLISC	Learning Lessons Implementation Steering Committee
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MAP	Multilevel Assessment Program
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MESS	Maths English Science and SOSE
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCF	National Communications Fund
NT	Northern Territory
NTBOS	Northern Territory Board of Studies
NTCE	Northern Territory Certificate of Education
NTCF	Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
NT DEET	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training
NTMS	Northern Territory Music School
NTOEC	Northern Territory Open Education Centre
NTSOL	NT School of Languages
OAC	Open Access College
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SAMS	Student Administration Management System
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SACSA	South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability
SAS	School Assessed Subjects
SBPO	School Based Police Officer
SCRCSSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision
SOCCI	Schools Online Curriculum Content Initiative
SOSE	Studies of Society and Environment
SRC	Student Representative Council

SSABSA	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia
STAR	Students at Risk
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAPRIC	Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities
TEP	Teacher of Exemplary Practice
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TRY	Training for Remote Youth
VET	Vocational Education and Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory is the report of what has commonly been referred to as the *Secondary Education Review*.

In September 2002, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the Hon. Clare Martin, MLA and the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon. Syd Stirling, MLA announced the Government's intention to commission a comprehensive report on secondary education in the NT. At the time of the announcement, the Chief Minister said that she particularly wanted to know how well the Territory's secondary schools compare with those in other states, and how well secondary education is being delivered to young Indigenous people on communities.

In February 2003, the nationally-advertised tender to undertake this project was awarded to Charles Darwin University (formerly the Northern Territory University). The review team comprised University personnel, external consultants, and staff seconded from the Department of Employment, Education and Training. It was led by one of the external consultants, Dr Gregor Ramsey, who has extensive experience undertaking similar reviews in various countries around the world. Six team members were based in Darwin and four were based in Alice Springs.

The team was required to undertake the review of secondary education in the Northern Territory in the context of

- the Northern Territory Government's commitment to create the 'Smart Territory' through 'Building Better Education'. This includes an emphasis on improving secondary education by: working to ensure that all students in urban, rural and remote communities have the opportunity to access high quality secondary education; ensuring that the delivery of secondary education is appropriate to each school community's needs; and building real pathways from school to training to skilled jobs

- the challenges presented by the diversity of current secondary education provision, which occurs in more than 60 Government and non-Government schools in the Northern Territory, for over 12 000 students living in urban, rural and remote communities. There are: junior secondary schools in urban settings providing for students in Years 7-10; comprehensive secondary schools catering for students in Years 8-12; senior colleges with students in Years 11 and 12 only; an open education centre providing distance education services for secondary students; area schools which include the primary years as well as students in Years 8-10; and an assortment of schools in remote communities providing post primary and secondary education.

The NT Government sought advice about the quality of secondary education provision and the outcomes being achieved. Because secondary education comes between primary schooling and young adulthood, the review found that in many instances it needed to make

suggestions about the whole system — changes in one part of education must affect other parts of the system, and it is impossible to change one part without change elsewhere. The Government also wanted advice about future directions for secondary education that will enable the Territory's education systems and their schools to guide our young people to take up their responsibilities in the century ahead. The *Report on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* provides this advice.

REVIEW PROCESS

Specifically, the Government required the review team to

- produce a profile of the secondary student cohort in the NT

- assess the comparability of the outcomes achieved by urban and remote secondary students

- review existing policy, planning procedures and accountability measures

- identify and assess internal and external impacts on secondary education provision

- identify opportunities for expanding pathways, particularly through Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- identify options for future secondary education provision

- prepare plans that detail implementation strategies.

Between February and August 2003, the review team undertook a search of the literature on secondary schooling, and some members undertook visits to best practice sites in other parts of Australia. An extensive and comprehensive program of consultations was undertaken, to allow members of the NT community to contribute to the review. A particular focus of the consultation program was talking with young people. Team members visited 134 sites across the Territory, including 40 remote Indigenous communities, and every secondary school. Meetings were held with representatives of a wide range of stakeholder groups, and public forums were conducted in each urban centre. The team also received and analysed 111 submissions to the review.

From the wealth of information and good ideas collected from young people, families, teachers and support staff in schools, administrators, employers and other interested members of the NT community, and from the literature on secondary schooling, the review team has mapped out a way forward that it believes will build on the many positive things that have already been achieved and, over time, will make the whole system of education in the NT more effective at all levels.

REVIEW FINDINGS

The review's findings need to be considered in context. In many ways the Territory exhibits a heightened version of the social crises that most of the Western world is now experiencing in

terms of disaffected youth, the changed nature of work and life choices, as well as the impacts of global digital communication and technology. As a small, isolated, relatively less affluent part of Australia having the highest proportion of Indigenous people in the country and with a greater cultural mix of people than any other jurisdiction, the Territory's problems are more public and sharply defined than elsewhere. The review team heard many times that secondary education in the Northern Territory is in crisis, and while the team does not share that view over all, there are major issues that must be addressed, particularly those associated with secondary education for young Indigenous people in remote communities, and for those young people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – whose needs are not being met by what is currently being offered in our regional and urban secondary schools.

Much of the discussion in the report may seem negative. However, the review team met numerous young people for whom the education system is working very well, and for whom the future looks bright; it met many committed, caring staff in schools and offices all over the Territory who are working extremely hard in often challenging circumstances to deliver quality education services to the young people in Territory schools; it saw exciting, innovative and potentially ground-breaking solutions to these challenges being tried, new initiatives being tested; it met senior officers in education systems determined to work with parents and the community to improve the quality of educational services being offered on the ground and improve outcomes for all of the Territory's young people.

Even so, there are significant issues to be addressed. These will take substantial time, major effort, long term commitment, more effective use of current resources and some substantial additional resourcing from both the Territory and Commonwealth Governments, if the NT is to have a nationally competitive secondary education system that works for all its young people. It will also require openness to change on the part of all stakeholders. The NT Government will need to take the lead, but the Commonwealth must play a bigger and more integrated role in Territory education, particularly if the very serious issues in Indigenous education are to be addressed effectively.

It is for Governments to provide the necessary policy framework and resources, for the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to provide leadership, drive and support for the proposed changes, and for the schools and their communities to focus on young people in new ways so that they can achieve effective, sustainable lives.

The review's major findings can be summarised as follows.

Meeting the needs of young people

Many secondary schools in the Northern Territory have worked with a high degree of commitment and expertise to deliver an educational service to meet the diverse and changing needs of young people. Given their current structures and organisation, schools have been as flexible as possible in their approach to secondary education. Even so, much of what goes on in schools is not meeting the diverse needs of today's and tomorrow's young people. The

quality of teaching and learning in the Territory's secondary schools is variable, and effective performance management is not undertaken across the board. Many improvement initiatives have been introduced over the years, but often they are not sustained. In many cases this is because they have been introduced in response to funding opportunities that have been short-term. Sometimes, lack of an evidence-based approach has meant that, when funding for continuation has been available, arguments for continued support have been unsuccessful because they have not been backed up with demonstrated, measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Students' learning, curricular and social needs change as they progress through the various stages of schooling, and these have to be addressed if they are to be prepared for a variety of career or livelihood pathways and for lifelong learning. While many schools are trying to take a more holistic approach to preparing young people for the vast range of futures now available to them through, for example, the introduction of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and School Based Apprenticeships, secondary education still operates primarily as a sorting mechanism for university.

Many of the NT's young people are highly mobile, transient, and geographically isolated, and the Territory has the highest proportion of students with special needs, and the highest rate of youth homelessness in Australia. These challenges, often combined with irregular attendance and poor literacy and numeracy skills are key factors in a high proportion of them being poorly positioned to undertake secondary education and achieve satisfactory levels of performance. Increasing numbers of young people in schools have serious mental health and social welfare issues that are not being addressed, and these affect not only their ability to learn, but also the learning of others. Some schools have expanded the range of welfare services they offer for students, but the human and physical resources of many are so stretched that they are not able to meet the educational or the social and emotional needs of their students as well as is now necessary and as they would like.

Many young people in all parts of the Territory need greater support and understanding in their transitions from primary to secondary education, from junior to senior secondary, and from school to adulthood. Some young people find it difficult to adjust to the change in teaching and learning approaches from primary school to secondary school, particularly those whose levels of English literacy and numeracy are not sufficient to deal with secondary school expectations. Comments to the effect that 'primary schools teach children, secondary schools teach subjects' and 'junior secondary is an educational wasteland' were constantly made to the review.

The percentage of students who stay on beyond the junior secondary years has increased in recent years, although the retention rate in the NT (65%) is well below the national average (78%). Even though only a small proportion of students aspire to go on to university nationally and in the NT, curriculum and teaching and learning, particularly in the senior years, are shaped and driven by assessment for tertiary entrance, and often the demands of the senior

school curriculum and staffing take precedence over the specific needs of the junior secondary students. Many young people find little they see as relevant to their future lives in what is on offer in the secondary curriculum, and at present there is insufficient support in many schools to help them make sound choices during their schooling about their future lives.

Comparative performance

Obtaining meaningful and reliable data about the NT's secondary students proved to be an almost insurmountable challenge for the review, but, based on what could be ascertained, many of the more academically able secondary students in the NT achieve as well as or better than their interstate counterparts on traditional measures such as achieving a Year 12 certificate and a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) that allows them to go on to university studies. Overall, however, the performance of senior secondary students, particularly those in the middle part of the TER range, is below that of their interstate counterparts in South Australia. The percentage of primary students who achieve the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks is lower than any other state or territory, and many therefore enter high school without the levels of literacy and numeracy needed to cope with the secondary curriculum.

Indigenous issues

There are multiple challenges and complexities associated with the provision of secondary education for Indigenous students. While it has not proven possible to obtain accurate figures, there are estimates that up to, if not more than 3 500 Indigenous young people in the NT, or more than 20% of the secondary-aged cohort, are not enrolled in secondary school at all. Those who are enrolled comprise 32% of the secondary cohort, yet the number who achieved an NTCE in 2002 represents only six per cent of the total secondary student population. Although there is ostensibly equal access to secondary education for Indigenous young people in urban and regional centres, the outcomes that many of them achieve are not comparable with those of other students in these schools.

In remote areas, access to secondary education is poor or non-existent, and educational outcomes are negligible. In some cases remote Indigenous students are taught in facilities that are equivalent to those in poor third world countries; and many live in communities where there are no jobs available for them when they leave school, even if they were to complete their secondary education. In many remote communities, evidence that the community itself actively supports and gives high priority to the education that is provided was hard to find.

Except for a very small number of remote schools that have recently been given approval to introduce on site secondary education, current policy is that the NT Open Education Centre (NTOEC) is the registered provider of distance education for Indigenous students in remote schools. There are issues with the quality of the services it provides to these students, and, for many of them, distance learning is not the best mode of education in any case — they need access to more face-to-face teaching and on site support. Some boarding schools in

urban centres cater for remote Indigenous students. Poor retention and lack of achievement of outcomes at the secondary level are issues in some of these.

Resourcing

There is inequity in education provision across the Territory's urban, regional and remote schools. The critical issue underlying much of this inequity is the lack of, or inequitable distribution of human and physical resources. Equity of resourcing does not mean equal resourcing – it means differential resourcing according to local needs. There are wide variations between schools in the levels of resourcing, and in the quality of infrastructure, its maintenance and its degree of utilisation. There is no secondary provision at all in many remote areas, and schools in regional areas are also disadvantaged to some degree because of the relatively small size of their student populations and their isolation. Even in urban areas there is difference in the quality of educational provision in the secondary schools because of differences in their size and the diversity of their student populations.

There are approximately 1 000 teachers and 560 non-teaching staff working in Government secondary schools in the Territory. Student to teacher ratios are lower than those in other states and territories, but extra teaching and non-teaching resources are essential if NT schools are to meet the very diverse academic needs of the student cohort and address the serious issues associated with young people's social and emotional health and well-being. At present allocation of these extra resources is uneven, and in some instances inadequate.

Secondary education teacher shortages are already evident nationally, and are set to become more acute. As well as addressing the challenges posed by a national teaching shortage, the Territory faces issues of an ageing cohort of secondary teachers. In 2002, 56% of its teachers were in the 41–65 age bracket. The Territory also has a high turnover of teachers, particularly in remote areas where the average length of stay is 2.7 years. In urban secondary schools it is 4.6 years, and in regional schools it is 4.06 years. There are various incentives in place for NT teachers, but these are likely to prove insufficient to enable the NT to remain competitive with other states and countries as teacher shortages bite, given the comparative challenges of working in Territory schools.

The Territory's geographic isolation and dispersion present unique challenges for Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) infrastructure rollout, technical support and maintenance. Many schools are experiencing problems with the computer equipment provided through the Learning and Technology in Schools (LATIS) project. There is a view that the available resources have been spread too thinly, and consequently there are problems with the standard and appropriateness of the hardware and the software, insufficient bandwidth, and insufficient access to technical support and professional development for staff. The potential of ICTs in addressing some of the educational challenges in the NT is as yet largely untapped.

Capacity and capability

There is a need to build the capacity and capability of all stakeholder groups with a key role to play in improving the outcomes of secondary education in the Territory. These include principals, teachers and support staff in schools, those working in the education systems, the young people themselves, their families and the wider school community, employers, training organisations and higher education providers in the NT.

Many teachers feel that they are not well prepared in their initial teacher training for the kinds of situations encountered in the NT. For example, they feel helpless in the face of secondary-aged young people who are not literate or numerate. Secondary teachers are largely trained to teach subjects in a traditional discipline-based way, and have not been trained to handle the kinds of educational situations they are encountering. There is an urgent need to address issues in the areas of pre-service training, induction, performance management and in-service training and professional development for teachers and all other staff who work in schools.

At present there is insufficient support provided for young people who demonstrate academic potential, to deepen and extend their learning both during their schooling and for a number of years after completion. This applies also for those who have talents in the arts, enterprise, industry, sport, leadership and community participation. There are limited programs available designed to nurture their abilities. Opportunities for young people to participate in leadership programs and decision-making forums at the school, community and system levels are also not as readily available as they need to be.

Schools Councils and ASSPA Committees provide opportunities for some parents to contribute to educational decision making. A broader range of roles and responsibilities that parents and other members of the school community can take on to support secondary education is required, and encouragement, support, information and training appropriate to the various levels of involvement need to be provided.

The issues facing secondary-aged young people in the NT are multi-faceted, and can not all be addressed by schools alone. At present services to young people are provided by a range of government agencies, and there is little or no coordination or integration of effort or pooling of resources to enable more effective and efficient service provision.

Quality and accountability

Both Government and non-Government schools receive extensive amounts of government money, and should answer to the Government for its use. In 2002-03, the cost of providing secondary education in the NT is $13 057 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student.

Many parents and other members of the community would like access to accurate and useful reports on educational outcomes achieved at class, school, Territory and national levels. They would like to be reassured that NT secondary schools deliver a quality education, and to know

who is accountable if they do not. At present there are no formal means by which they or the Government can obtain evidence and be assured about the quality of the education that is being delivered.

THE WAY FORWARD

The review has found that there is room for improvement in the delivery of secondary education for many of the young people in the Northern Territory, especially those in remote locations. It believes that there is great opportunity to be innovative and creative in finding solutions and alternatives that will better fit the needs and aspirations of these young people and their communities. Many possibilities are opening up, particularly in terms of joining forces with other schools and communities, other service agencies, and other education providers, to work out coordinated and collaborative approaches to a variety of issues confronting the NT as a whole. Managing and delivering a relevant and exciting secondary education is one such issue of significant importance to the Territory's future.

The *Future Directions* report builds on the many positive initiatives that have been and are occurring in the NT, and seeks to initiate a process to improve secondary education. It proposes an ambitious and complex program of deep and far-reaching change that will require persistent effort and additional resources over many years.

There are discrete initiatives and activities already in place or in the early stages of implementation across the NT that are designed to tackle a number of the issues identified by the review, and new ones could be introduced separately to target the others. But to make real and lasting change that will maximise improvement in student outcomes, a multi-pronged approach is essential. Therefore the review proposes an integrated package of fifty-two recommendations that are designed to work together to tackle the issues in a strategic, coherent and coordinated way. The goal is a transformed, dynamic, diverse, high quality secondary education system that meets the needs of all Territory young people, opening up multiple pathways to many possible futures.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The full set of 52 recommendations is appended at the end of this Executive Summary. While each recommendation is designed to contribute to the overall change and improvement agenda, at the core of the review's package of recommendations are three that are central to the program of change that is required. These are

- adopt a new framework for the stages of schooling (Recommendation 10)

- endorse the principle of Learning Precincts and support their introduction (Recommendation 14)

- establish a separate statutory Quality Services Agency (Recommendation 44).

New stages of schooling

A key objective of the review's recommendations is for all Territory young people to be able to receive a high quality secondary education that meets their needs, no matter where they live – that all young people will be motivated and engaged in their secondary schooling, and that their educational opportunities and their learning are maximised. This includes those secondary-aged young people who are not enrolled currently.

To achieve better outcomes for all young people, the review proposes ways to deal with the wide span of learning required in secondary school, and the very different pedagogies (teaching and learning practices) needed to appeal to younger secondary-aged students, as compared with those required for young people approaching adulthood. It has set out two clear stages of secondary schooling, the 'later middle years' (Years 7–9) and the 'senior years' (Years 10–12). The introduction of these two stages needs to be accompanied by changes to curriculum and pedagogy for each of them, and also changes to the current organisational and physical structures of schools. The movement of Year 7 students to high school will be required in those parts of the Territory where this is not already the case, as will the movement of Year 10s to senior colleges or the senior part of the secondary school. To allow sufficient planning and preparation time, it is proposed that these moves occur in 2006.

In the meantime, to assist teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of students in the new stages of schooling, it will be essential for DEET to develop a Teaching and Learning Framework that teachers can use to build their repertoires of pedagogies, and for an accompanying professional development program to be designed and implemented. Support will also be needed to enable professional learning communities to be established, in which teachers will have the opportunity to develop, share, trial and test these pedagogies; and opportunities should be provided for teachers to use action research to explore innovative teaching and learning models.

To further assist teachers meet students' needs in the various stages of schooling, the review recommends that, at the individual level, a learning profile be developed for each student on entry to school that will record their progress as a learner throughout their schooling years. At the system level the introduction of Multi-level Assessment Program (MAP) testing at Year 9 is recommended, to add to the data obtained from MAP testing in Years 3, 5 and 7, and so provide longitudinal data about the performance of the student cohort. When students enter the senior years, to meet their learning needs and also to help them plan and prepare for their futures, the review recommends that they be allocated a Pathways Mentor to support and monitor their learning and career pathways and to track their progress through the senior years and for up to one year after the completion of schooling. It also recommends that these mentors assist the students to develop a Futures Portfolio before they leave school that records their achievements and provides them with a specific plan for their future, whether it

is employment, further training, higher education, community participation, or some combination of these.

Learning Precincts

Another key objective of the review's recommendations is to achieve a re-structured education system that makes the best use of all available resources to meet the diverse educational needs of students, staff and the community. To provide the best possible support to young people and their learning, the review has developed the concept of a Learning Precinct, which is designed to meet the diversity and complexity of the educational, social and emotional needs of young people, to allow for the best use of both physical and human resources, and to offer opportunities for greater local governance and community involvement in education.

A Learning Precinct as conceived by the review is a set of schools working in partnership under one governance structure, led by one Head of Precinct, with a special relationship with its collective community. It will establish

- schools or sub-schools that focus on particular stages of schooling but with strong links between them to facilitate transitions

- a site or sites for alternative provision

- student welfare networks with a range of professional and para-professional support

- formal relationships with other educational providers and community service organisations in the area

- formal and informal links with local business and industry

- opportunities for parents and caregivers to be involved in the education of their children at a range of levels and in a variety of roles

- formal and informal links with non-Government schools

- links with precincts in other localities to share expertise and support

and in remote areas a precinct may also include a regional boarding school.

Learning Precincts will make many of the problems of delivery easier to solve, such as transitions from primary to secondary, from later middle to senior years, from school to work or further study or community participation. The Learning Precinct concept gives schools an opportunity to join together to develop creative and innovative solutions to meet the educational needs of young people within their orbit.

Key to achieving the review's vision for an improved secondary education system in the NT will be a high quality, diverse education workforce that is valued and supported, motivated and capable, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of young people. Schools and Learning Precincts[1] must be places of learning for all students, teachers, support staff, other professionals and parents. The establishment of professional learning communities as recommended by the review will assist in achieving this, enhancing the 'learning culture' that is vital if these organisations and the people within them are to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The review recommends the provision of substantial extra support to recruitment and retention strategies, induction, staff incentives, performance management, teacher training and professional development. It also makes recommendations about increasing the numbers and range of para-professionals working in schools to address the diverse needs of young people, freeing up teachers to focus on their core business of teaching. Initiatives to build the leadership capacity of young people and staff in schools and of staff in the department are also recommended, as this capacity will be critical to implementing the changes proposed and achieving and maintaining high quality secondary education provision. Changes to DEET are also recommended, to position it to support the increased focus on teaching and learning in schools, and the formation and operations of Learning Precincts.

Quality Services Agency

Another key objective of the review recommendations is for Territorians to know they have a quality education system that meets the needs of its young people and the Territory, and so it is proposing systems to monitor the quality of education providers and the quality of the education services being delivered in schools and Learning Precincts.

The *Future Directions* report discusses the issue of quality many times, particularly the quality of curriculum, of teachers and teaching, and of the schools themselves. It recommends the establishment of a Quality Services Agency, an independent body to have a responsibility to report on all aspects of quality to the Government, to schools and to parents.

The review proposes that the Quality Services Agency incorporate the current work of the NT Board of Studies and the Teacher Registration Board, and take over from DEET the responsibility for the registration of non-Government schools, changing this to a process of accreditation and adding a responsibility for the accreditation of Government schools.

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[1] **Schools and learning precincts**: Throughout the report the phrase 'schools and learning precincts' is often used. This recognises that most of the recommendations for change apply to both structures and are not solely dependent on the acceptance of the learning precinct model, although the review believes learning precincts offer the best opportunity for the delivery of quality education and improved learning outcomes for students.

IMPLEMENTATION

These changes do not come cheap, and nor can they be implemented all at once. It will take many years to achieve the vision of the *Future Directions* report. An estimated additional $65 million of NT Government funding is required over the next five years to start the change process, and some $11 million from the Commonwealth in the first instance. These amounts are the minimum that will be needed to bring about the massive changes required if the bulk of the Indigenous population is to be brought to the standard of other secondary students, and all Territory students to standards that are met in other states.

An indicative timeline for implementation of the major initiatives is as follows.

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Increase focus on **quality teaching and learning** – delivery and support				
Increase **capacity and capability** – training, recruitment, professional development, performance management, leadership				
Develop **Learning Precincts**		Fully implement **Learning Precincts**		
	Prepare Years 6 & 7 students for move to high school	Fully implement new **stages of schooling**		
Amend **legislation**				
Establish **Quality Services Agency**				
Negotiate intra- and inter-**government funding and support**				
Re-design and re-focus **systemic support** – teaching and learning support, data, integrated services				
Improve **service delivery** – ICT, infrastructure, remote delivery, VET				

The community expects its young people to be socially well-adjusted, able to draw from and contribute to our society, as well as to grow as healthy and fulfilled human beings through a process of lifelong learning. According to the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century,

> *Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.*

<div align="right">(MCEETYA, 1999)</div>

In the end it is for the Government to decide the direction for the future. The review came to the conclusion that a bold move forward in education is essential if the next generation of Territorians is to be well prepared to take on the very special challenges of the 21st Century. It argues that the old strategies, structures and approaches are no longer appropriate. While there are no simple solutions, structures that allow people to show flexibility, enterprise and leadership are more likely to provide solutions that will work, and systems that are accountable for what they do will serve young people best. In the *Future Directions* report, the

review believes it has provided a framework within which the transformation of secondary education can occur for the benefit of the Territory's young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING

It is recommended that

1. as a matter of priority, NT DEET develop a Teaching and Learning Framework that defines the essential features of good pedagogies and aligns curricula and assessment practices with this Framework, for approval by the NT Board of Studies.

2. NT DEET continue and expand its support for special pedagogies and resources to enhance teaching and learning
    - for secondary students with special needs including boys and girls, those at risk in literacy and numeracy, those with disabilities and gifted and talented students
    - through ICT and the new technologies.

3. NT DEET require every NT school to collect relevant data so that every student has a Learning Profile available on the Integris database which records their progress as a learner, detailing any special learning needs, attendance, achievements at the Band levels of the NTCF and MAP test results.

4. NT DEET invite the Australian Information Industry Association to be a partner in developing and funding at least one Lighthouse School in a remote precinct, as a beginning of increased support and development of ICT pedagogy and practice in remote schools NT wide.

5. to improve the quality of teaching and learning, NT DEET
    - assist principals of schools or heads of precincts to establish professional learning communities where teachers and teaching support staff develop, trial, evaluate and share teaching and learning practices based on the essential features of good pedagogy established in the Teaching and Learning Framework
    - establish a Research and Innovation Unit to facilitate and support the development of Research and Innovation Circles with research support from other relevant providers such as the School of Social Research and Policy at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE). The purpose of these Circles is to explore teaching and learning models that go beyond the boundaries of accepted or traditional pedagogies and test new ideas.

CHAPTER 4: CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

It is recommended that

6. to support the ongoing implementation of the NTCF in secondary schools NT DEET
    - as part of the 2005 review of the NTCF, continue to work with teachers to refine, define and exemplify outcomes and benchmark indicators of the NTCF

- as part of the 2005 review of the NTCF, revise the enterprise strand in the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) learning area and vocational learning as a cross-curricular perspective of the NTCF, to reflect the importance of vocational, enterprise and livelihoods learning in the later middle years
- provide professional development programs for effective pedagogy to support secondary teachers and other educators in the implementation of the NTCF.

7. to offer a more relevant and appropriate curriculum for the range of students in the senior years, NT DEET

- work with SSABSA to improve further the relevance and flexibility of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 curriculum statements to be more appropriate to the needs of Territory students
- work with Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) to improve the nature, flexibility and recognition of VET courses in the senior years
- expand the current range of vocational, livelihood and VET curriculum and pedagogies to occupy a greater part of the courses on offer in the senior years (Years 10 –12).

8. in order to improve and extend assessment and reporting practices in secondary schools, NT DEET

- provide professional support to schools and precincts to improve assessment practices, using samples of work from the Evidence of Learning folders and the electronic data base, Explore NT, for school/precinct-based literacy and numeracy moderation
- support teachers and other educators to analyse, interpret and evaluate assessment data for planning and reporting purposes
- introduce Year 9 MAP testing in literacy and numeracy
- develop a policy and set of procedures to acknowledge learning outcomes achieved by students in the later middle years in contexts beyond the classroom
- work with SSABSA, secondary schools and moderators to improve overall student performance in the NTCE
- assist staff in schools and precincts to provide meaningful assessment data and reports to parents at regular intervals throughout the school year, and relevant certification on the completion of each stage of schooling.

9. the NT Government, through the Minister, take up with the appropriate Ministerial Council the feasibility of a national testing regime for technacy to parallel testing for literacy and numeracy so that standards can be established for these skills; and that NT DEET undertake preliminary work in this area which may be presented at appropriate forums to bring the issue onto the national education agenda.

CHAPTER 5: STAGES OF SCHOOLING

It is recommended that

10. the NT Government approve the new Framework for the Stages of Schooling for adoption in Northern Territory schools, and that

- 2004-2005 be designated planning time for implementation of these new stages, with a view to commencing the movement of Year 7 students to high school where this is not already the case in 2006
- the movement of Year 10s to senior schools occur within a compatible timeframe
- in 2004-05 the NT Board of Studies, in consultation with SSABSA, advise on any implications of the changed stages for curriculum and assessment.

11. to meet the pedagogical, curricular and social needs of students in the later middle and senior years, NT DEET

- develop a policy and strategy for the Territory-wide implementation of curriculum and pedagogy for the later middle and senior years as outlined in the framework for the Stages of Schooling, with the Middle Years and Senior Years Teams in DEET being responsible for facilitating its implementation in schools
- assist Learning Precincts to determine the mix of school organisation and structures best suited to meet the needs of their students, within the context of the new stages of schooling proposed in this report.

12. to monitor and support student learning and career pathways in the senior years and students' transition from school to employment, further training or higher education, NT DEET

- require that schools and Learning Precincts provide pathways mentorship to each student in the senior years and for up to one year after completion, to advise on and manage student progress through their chosen learning and career pathways
- provide funding as part of the Precinct Establishment Grant or through separate funding to schools and precincts, for training of current staff, and for para-professional support to ensure that each precinct is able to meet its responsibilities to provide pathways mentoring to all senior students
- require that a Futures Portfolio be developed by each student with assistance from the pathways mentor, to record their achievements and provide a specific plan for their future pathway
- require that the Learning Profile be extended at Year 10 to record student career and learning pathways during their senior years
- require schools to collect destination data one year after students have completed their schooling, and this data be provided to DEET for system-level decision making and reporting.

CHAPTER 6: LEARNING PRECINCTS

It is recommended that

13.   to develop the capacity of schools and precincts to meet the complex and varied educational, social and emotional needs of students, NT DEET

- make provision so that every secondary school has a counsellor or access to a counsellor to meet the social and emotional needs of students

- make provision so that each learning precinct as it is established will have at least one psychologist experienced in working with young people

- make provision so that every secondary school has at least one careers adviser or access to careers advice, and require that these advisers lead the Pathways Mentorship program described in Chapter 5.

14.   the NT Government endorse the principle of Learning Precincts and support their introduction by

- providing for their establishment in legislation

- authorising a plan similar to that outlined in Chapter 7 for establishing their functions and operations

- requiring schools, within six months of the acceptance and publication of this report, to have completed initial discussions about which schools will join together, so that precinct development might then proceed through the phases outlined in Chapter 7

- supporting the establishment of each precinct with additional funds in the form of a Precinct Establishment Grant to cover development costs, paid annually, but contingent upon successful completion of each of Phases One to Three

- re-naming School Councils and re-defining their roles and responsibilities as contained in the Education Act.

15.   to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of distance education for all students, NT DEET

- revise the policy whereby the NT Open Education Centre (NTOEC) is the registered provider of secondary education in some remote communities, so that those communities with sufficient numbers of secondary students can become the provider and run a secondary program in the core learning areas of English, maths, science and SOSE, based on the later middle years schooling approaches outlined in Chapter 5

- establish regional pools of specialist subject teachers, use resources from NTOEC as appropriate to service a region or a precinct's remote secondary schools

- consult with current stakeholders in distance education, and explore the feasibility of a joint venture with the SA Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), in order to develop a new model of open learning and distance education delivery in the NT that best meets the needs of secondary students

- make appropriate transitional arrangements to allow for uninterrupted learning of current NTOEC students so that they are not adversely affected by the closure of NTOEC and the implementation of the new model in 2006
- work with NTOEC staff to identify options for their redeployment to the various precincts or the new Teaching and Learning Support Division.

16. NT DEET move the teaching and learning support functions at the NT School of Languages (NTSOL) and the curriculum materials development functions at NTOEC to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division.

CHAPTER 7: ESTABLISHING LEARNING PRECINCTS

It is recommended that

17. to assist in the planning for learning precincts, NT DEET
- work with schools their communities and other relevant agencies to develop Learning Precincts as defined in this report according to the specific and different needs of urban, regional and remote areas
- when a particular set of partnerships is agreed upon, work with an initial implementation group to be formed, consisting of the current school principals and school community representatives, to prepare a plan for precinct development, following the phases outlined in Chapter 7.
- as a matter of priority, hold discussions with the Palmerston and Taminmin High Schools communities and the wider Palmerston and outer Darwin communities to determine the most appropriate option for the new secondary education facility in Palmerston, and that options considered be in accordance with the Learning Precinct model as outlined in this report
- as a matter of priority, hold discussions with the CDU so that the memorandum of understanding between DEET and the university regarding Centralian College is in accordance with the Stages of Schooling and Learning Precinct models
- work with its own schools and any non-Government schools that wish to be involved with a precinct, to establish individually negotiated Memoranda of Understanding about the terms of their participation.

18. to assist in the establishment of Learning Precincts NT DEET work with schools to
- implement the introduction of Learning Precincts through a staged process according to the four phases of precinct development as outlined in this report. The development of precincts should coincide with the movement of Year 7 into high school in the Top End, and with Year 10 consolidating with Years 11 and 12 at the same time, planned for 2006
- adopt as guidelines for precinct development and implementation the advice provided in this chapter about the responsibilities and operation of learning precinct

governance structures, about relationships between precincts and between them and NT DEET, and about links between the Quality Services Agency and the precincts.

CHAPTER 8: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

While there are only three recommendations attached to this chapter, this should not be seen to indicate that the review team considers Indigenous education as an area warranting limited attention. The other chapters of this report also address issues that affect Indigenous young people, and include recommendations that will contribute to improvements in secondary education provision for them.

It is recommended that

19. the NT Government establish a cross agency task force to develop community based Language Nests that link to the existing Indigenous Knowledge Centre initiative. The task force should consider

- the ways in which such Nests should operate
- educational potential of consolidating contemporary ways and means to value Indigenous knowledge capital in schools
- existing programs or initiatives that the Language Nest model could build upon
- business models and emerging enterprise opportunities that could be facilitated
- the role of Indigenous education workers and community members in brokering the knowledge capital enhanced by this initiative.

20. to expand the educational experiences and leadership opportunities for young Indigenous people, the NT Government

- establish in 2004 a scholarship and mentorship program that builds over five years to 100 Indigenous students, for Indigenous young people who show that they have a talent, or have taken initiative, or show signs of potential high achievement in a range of areas of endeavour
- instigate discussions with key private companies operating on or near Indigenous lands or communities, and with the Indigenous peoples and their representative organisations, regarding how negotiated partnerships or agreements can improve explicit educational outcomes for young Indigenous people.

21. the NT Government require that those involved with the provision of secondary education in existing and future boarding schools in regional and urban settings, work with schools and families in the home communities to improve Indigenous student retention and achievement. Both the boarding school and the school in the home community or precinct must work together to be accountable for

- implementing assessments and programs so that young people are socially and academically prepared for secondary education in an urban/regional setting

- the provision of ongoing support to Indigenous young people before, during and after their transition from remote communities to urban/regional boarding schools and hostels.

CHAPTER 9: BUILDING CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

It is recommended that

22. to develop the quality of leadership in schools and precincts and to assist in developing a more strategic approach to leadership, NT DEET
- in negotiation with schools and precincts develop and apply clearly defined and measurable performance indicators for all school principals as part of their annual performance management appraisal
- offer all future executive teachers and assistant principal positions for a defined period with reversionary clauses so that people filling these positions can go back to teaching if they do not apply for or win a promotion position at the end of their tenure
- develop a leadership program for young teachers in the early stages of their careers who show potential to be educational leaders in the future
- expand the Capability Development Unit in Schools Division to enable more schools access to its support.

23. in order to strengthen the role of Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs) and to allow for equitable distribution of TEP expertise across the system, NT DEET
- redefine the roles and responsibilities of TEPs to include precinct-wide responsibilities for good pedagogy and curriculum implementation, and assuming a structured and systematic role in mentoring student teachers
- examine and review as appropriate the application process and selection criteria for becoming a TEP
- review the accountability arrangements across the three TEP levels
- provide opportunities for the strategic placement of TEPs in schools, with a view to making the system more effective in the Learning Precinct context and to providing for a more equitable distribution of TEPs across the system.

24. to recognise and nurture the range of gifts and talents demonstrated by young Territorians, the NT Government
- establish scholarships and mentoring programs for young people with talent or initiative, or who show signs of potential high achievement in a variety of areas of endeavour such as academic pursuits, enterprise, business, industry, the arts, music and community participation
- establish various Young Territorian Awards to recognise outstanding achievement by secondary school students in a variety of areas, not just academic.

25. to extend opportunities for young people and parents to assume a range of roles in educational forums and participate in decision making, NT DEET
   - establish a Chief Executive's Student Forum, perhaps modelled on the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians, to obtain direct input from young people about the education system
   - assist schools and precincts to develop specific programs for young people to prepare them to undertake leadership and support roles in their own communities
   - assist schools and learning precincts to develop specific programs to increase the knowledge, skills and experience of parents and teachers in working together to enhance young people's learning.

26. to maintain the quality and professional standards of teachers, NT DEET
   - define the roles and responsibilities of secondary teachers in the Northern Territory as outlined in Chapter 5, in order to differentiate between those who teach in the later middle years (Years 7–9), and those who teach in the senior years (Years 10–12)
   - define the roles and responsibilities common to NT secondary teachers in all years and all disciplines
   - require schools, where necessary, to provide professional development for teachers so that that they are sufficiently prepared to fulfil these roles.

27. to allow for more flexibility in staffing arrangements to meet the changing needs of students, NT DEET
   - work with relevant groups and Government agencies towards a simplified, consistent system of training, funding and employment of support staff in schools and precincts, and to develop more efficient ways of those groups and agencies cooperating with DEET to support young people's needs
   - consult with schools, learning precincts and unions to establish staffing requirements at the local level to implement the new arrangements outlined in this report.

28. in order to recruit, retain and value teachers, NT DEET
   - establish a strategic recruitment unit to act as an agency for all schools and precincts in the Territory, to provide a pool of recruits for appointment to all positions that are created or become vacant. This service is to be forward looking to meet current and future needs as identified in close consultation with the schools and precincts
   - require that this recruitment unit set in place, as a matter of urgency, a recruitment strategy targeting areas of shortage such as skills in literacy and numeracy teaching in secondary schools, mathematics, ICT, technology and enterprise and vocational learning

- investigate, adapt and implement a model of induction to parallel the new pedagogy required by this report, including setting up probationary and mentoring mechanisms to meet the needs of the new learning precincts
- expand the range of incentives to attract and keep teachers in the Territory, and to acknowledge their professional contributions.

29. to improve the quality of and take a more strategic approach to pre-service training, NT DEET
    - work with schools and learning precincts, and with relevant providers, especially CDU and BIITE, to develop and implement a more rigorous and strategic approach to pre-service teacher training and training support staff to prepare them for the new pedagogical and other requirements arising from this review
    - approach the Commonwealth to fund ten scholarships for the Territory each year for the next five years for suitable Indigenous people to train as secondary teachers
    - require that the NT Government's Teacher Bursary program give priority to applicants seeking to train in areas of shortage in secondary schools
    - work with CDU and BIITE to establish a fast-tracking teacher-training program for areas where there is an identified teacher shortage.

30. to improve the quality and relevance of professional development, NT DEET
    - work with schools and precincts, and with relevant providers to give priority to the DEET Workforce Development Strategy 2003- 2005, and implement a professional learning communities approach to professional development for all staff employed in secondary education
    - prioritise later middle years pedagogies, literacy and numeracy teaching, maths, ICT skills, enterprise and vocational teaching skills and cross cultural effectiveness training, for professional development of secondary staff.

31. NT DEET work with schools and learning precincts and its own centrally located functions, to develop and implement a rigorous and consistent staff performance management system that is locally tailored, but meets the requirements of the system.

CHAPTER 10: IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

It is recommended that

32. NT DEET, as part of its responsibilities to oversee the formation of learning precincts, work closely with <u>urban</u> and <u>regional</u> schools and learning precincts to develop and implement a strategic plan of infrastructure utilisation, maintenance, re-modelling and rollout to support the range of new pedagogies proposed by this review.

33. NT DEET, together with schools and learning precincts, develop a strategic plan for infrastructure utilisation, maintenance, and remodelling for <u>remote</u> areas, and for the staged rollout of new secondary education service delivery for Indigenous young people in remote areas based on the size of the student cohort, and on community commitment to and readiness for secondary education, informed by current student attendance and MAP data. The provision must

- meet standards for infrastructure that are equivalent to those offered in urban and regional areas but specifically designed to meet pedagogical, cultural and community needs

- involve whole-of-government discussion forums as part of Phases One and Two of precinct development, so that all services can come together to facilitate more appropriate and cost effective shared infrastructure planning

- include a formal agreement at Phase Two of precinct development, between NT DEET and the community/communities where the stakeholders are open about their expectations of secondary education

- involve extensive consultation, particularly at Phases Two and Three of precinct development, to design a model or models that meet the education and training needs of the particular community or communities. These could include traditional secondary models, regional or hub boarding schools, and any of the solutions suggested in this report, or new ones that the process of consultation might devise

- include establishment grants for new sites, particularly in relation to the provision of remote hub boarding schools or other new infrastructure as above, but also in terms of developing service delivery and resource materials in places where there has been no provision of secondary education in the past.

34. as a matter of priority the NT Government develop a strategic approach to the provision of accommodation and transport for education staff working in remote areas that is equivalent to that offered by other agencies and is responsive to changing needs.

35. to improve the delivery of vocational and enterprise learning and VET programs to all students in the Territory, NT DEET

- as part of the development of Learning Precinct strategic plans for secondary delivery, work closely with each school or precinct, to develop and enhance the

provision of enterprise and vocational learning, and VET, taking into consideration alternatives provided in this report

- require that learning precincts foster livelihood activities, small enterprises or work opportunities for students in cooperation and partnership with their communities
- set aside funds each year to be used for enterprise establishment grants, to be allocated to enterprise development projects proposed by students, classes and schools, or learning precincts
- negotiate with ANTA so there is no impediment to effective delivery of VET programs, particularly for remote precincts.

36. to improve student and teacher access to and use of ICT, NT DEET

- divide its ICT section into two parts: one to manage the administration requirements of the department and schools; the other to support schools in developing appropriate pedagogy, materials and online services to assist in teaching the curriculum wherever secondary education is taking place, with this second group moving to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division
- work closely with each school and Learning Precinct to enhance ICT and to develop their effectiveness as users for normal communication within the school and precinct, and with the department
- require the schools or Learning Precincts to prepare a plan so that all members of staff are skilled in ICT use and undertake all normal communication via this medium by the commencement of the 2007 teaching year
- require the schools or Learning Precincts to develop an ICT strategic plan for the introduction and consolidation of ICT in its pedagogy, materials and on-line services
- make provision so that each individual teacher in every NT secondary school has ready access to a new computer, via a computer on each full time teacher's desk, and so that each teacher knows how to use it by the beginning of the 2007 teaching year
- make provision for effective maintenance and industry standard software upgrade to keep all computers operating effectively
- seek Commonwealth funding so that all secondary education providers in the NT have access to adequate bandwidth
- make provision for ICT service support in secondary schools to enable effective interactive distance learning and Internet access
- take note of and implement findings of current Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) projects under way, including the Business Viability Study and the Mobile Education and Training Project.

37. in order to achieve better ICT services through aggregated bandwidth, the NT Government require that all its sectors and agencies work together to support online

access centres in regional and remote communities and to enable these community facilities to remain viable.

CHAPTER 11: RE-SHAPING THE SYSTEM

It is recommended that

38. NT DEET establish a Teaching and Learning Support Division by bringing together and re-structuring the existing units or functions that focus on the provision of quality services to students and to schools.

39. to improve the collection, analysis and evaluation of data for school improvement, NT DEET
- strengthen its system of data collection, and that this be achieved through the negotiation of a contract for a specified period with another suitable organisation or jurisdiction for the provision of appropriate advice and expertise to refine current data systems and processes, and suitable training for all DEET staff with data collection and analysis responsibilities
- assess the resources in the Business Planning and Information Division, and allocate additional resources if appropriate, so that sufficient suitably trained staff are available to provide the full range of necessary data and to assist schools, precincts and the system to use their data most effectively.

40. NT DEET engage the services of an external organisational design expert to work with relevant staff to re-design the current structures. The re-design should result in a head office structure that can: achieve better-integrated, precinct-focused policy and service delivery; minimise fragmentation and improve alignment, coordination and knowledge management across all functional areas; and enhance the culture of the department. It should accommodate all the support functions that have been identified in this review, namely
- a central policy function
- a Teaching and Learning Support Division
- a Precincts Support Unit
- an expanded Capability Development Unit
- a Strategic Teacher Recruitment Unit
- a Research and Innovation Unit
- support for various advisory groups such as the CE's Student Forum
- change management leadership and support
- knowledge management
- partnerships development (MOUs with other agencies and organisations, education providers).

41. to implement the changes proposed in this review the NT Government

- fund the establishment of a team, dedicated specifically to implementation of this review's recommendations. The review implementation team is to be based in NT DEET and report to the Chief Executive, with responsibility for managing the process of planning and implementing those changes proposed in this review as agreed to by the Government; and that the terms of reference of the team be broad, with the delivery of agreed outcomes the major test of its effectiveness
- establish a small steering committee to be chaired by the CE of NT DEET to advise the Minister on all aspects of the implementation of the review, and to be responsible for monitoring that the implementation team is managing the change process effectively and efficiently
- require that a 'think tank' be established by the steering committee, composed of widely respected secondary teachers and at least one primary teacher, to provide advice as requested to the steering committee and the implementation team.

CHAPTER 12: QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

It is recommended that

42. the NT Government review its allocation of funding across the sectors of education and particularly that to secondary education so that the deficiencies identifies in this report may be more adequately addressed.

43. NT DEET require schools to develop agreements of mutual responsibilities in education between schools, secondary students, and their parents/caregivers for students in Years 7 and 10 which will include
- an outline of the learning opportunities and support to be provided by the school
- expectations of the student in regards to attendance, work habits and behaviour
- the level of support required of parents for their child's education.

44. the NT Government establish a separate statutory Quality Services Agency to be responsible to the Minister for advising the Government on all aspects of quality in education, having jurisdiction over both Government and non-Government schools. This Agency will
- incorporate the role and responsibilities of the Board of Studies and advise on the quality of the curriculum taught in schools and the processes of student assessment and certification
- incorporate the role and responsibilities of the proposed Teacher Registration Board to advise on those appropriate to be registered as teachers and the quality of their work
- institute a system of registering para-professional and other professional staff, including the requirements for training and induction that must be met before they can work in schools and learning precincts

- establish and maintain a system for the accreditation of all schools and learning precincts, building on the processes already in place for registering non-Government schools, and for their performance management against their individual strategic plans, so that the Government and the wider community may be advised on the quality of education on offer at educational institutions in the Territory

- advise the NT Government on the quality of teacher education courses on offer in the Territory and elsewhere and accredit those courses producing teachers with the appropriate level of knowledge and skills to be teachers in the Territory, and to accredit courses for graduate teachers designed to improve their level of professional skill, taking into account the new roles of secondary teachers proposed in Chapter 9

- provide a system of grievance resolution for students, parents, and the wider community where they believe there are issues relating to students, teachers, the curriculum, and schools or learning precincts, that have not been addressed after attempts to resolve them at the local level

- review the activities of the department responsible for education in the Territory and advise the Minister on the quality of its services

- in itself, be subject to review at regular intervals of not more than five years by an external assessment team, reporting to the Minister, and the report to be tabled in Parliament to receive scrutiny through the normal parliamentary processes.

CHAPTER 13: ENABLING CHANGE

It is recommended that

45. the NT Government consider the possibility of preparing a new Education Act as part of the lead up to achieving statehood, advised by wide ranging public discussion and encapsulating the fundamental purposes now seen for a 21st Century education and training system; and that it amend the current Act until such time as the new one is prepared.

46. the NT Government legislate that a student may not leave school or other forms of accredited education or training until the end of the year in which they turn 15 years of age.

47. to improve student attendance, NT DEET

- monitor and analyse the attendance patterns and practices in primary schools, and determine 'at risk' levels as a basis for action so that children do not develop poor attendance habits before they reach secondary school

- continue this analysis and action into the compulsory years of secondary school attendance

- require schools and learning precincts to draw up their own strategies for attendance, and the actions to be taken when students are absent.

48. NT DEET negotiate with Centrelink and the relevant Commonwealth authorities to
- work more closely with schools to improve attendance for those students on youth allowance and other payments
- to offer support to students in their transition from school to work, further training, higher education and/or community participation.

49. to allow for a more integrated and strategic approach to education in remote areas, the NT Government
- approach the Commonwealth for funds to establish a Centre for Remote Education
- set up a process whereby an overall framework is established and resources and support for the centre are provided by NT DEET and other educational providers, including CDU, BIITE, the Desert Peoples Centre, the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and such other bodies as have an interest in this area.

50. to improve the delivery of services to young people, the NT Government approve that
- an integrated services approach to solving the problems of various towns and communities be adopted wherever practicable, based on the learning precinct structure
- the learning precinct responsible for education in the region or area be an integral part of the integrated services approach to improving the total learning environment
- the Department of the Chief Minister coordinate the integrated services approach, including the involvement of relevant Commonwealth government agencies
- a cross-portfolio taskforce be established to manage the overall task of integrating education into the total service provision, the taskforce to consist of members of each portfolio and include appropriate Commonwealth funding agencies
- a taskforce be established at the town or community level, with a person from one of the portfolios to be in charge of the total service provision in that location
- funding in the 2004-2005 and subsequent financial years be achieved by taking funds 'off the top' of each department's budget until an ongoing item for this activity becomes a firm part of the Territory's budget.

51. the NT Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, coordinate and fund a bi-lateral approach to the provision of education for the Indigenous young people of the Territory, and that this joint approach focus particularly on
- the educational needs of Indigenous communities, as a first priority
- improving the quality of life for families on remote Indigenous communities, including appropriate improved infrastructure and services for families, housing, health, recreation, training and employment

- providing targeted programs integral to the improvement of secondary education provision to tackle issues of substance abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and domestic violence, and other activities that run counter to providing sound education
- developing within secondary schools and/or precincts small enterprises of value to a community where young people can learn to provide a service, as well as build their skill levels
- providing the funding that is needed to achieve the task, consolidated so that precincts can manage their education and training provision in a manner that best suits their particular context.

52. NT DEET hold discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including the AEU, CPSU, CDU, BIITE, industry and business and parents as early as possible, to negotiate a collaborative, positive and supportive approach to proposed changes, based on the best interests of the students.

CHAPTER 1
A NEW TERRITORY

> All young Territorians have the right to access quality, affordable education and training, no matter how difficult this may be to deliver.

1. This review is about the young people of the Territory. We have looked at them anew based on the core principle that **all** *young Territorians have the right to access quality, affordable education and training, no matter how difficult this may be to deliver.* This does not mean to deliver the same education; it means to deliver the education that is right for each individual young person. This is new territory for many—young Indigenous people, those who find their current schooling not for them, those who are not 'work ready' when they leave school, those who want to develop different skills and interests from the ones available at school.

2. We found many young people remarkable in the insights they had about their education and their futures. They understood more than most that the essence of an education is to make life worth living—not just to impart skills and knowledge, but also to learn to manage whatever life deals out so that they can have productive lives. We recall the young woman who said she would take on whatever was put before her at school so long as it led to university. We remember another young woman who dropped out of Year 10, but who had gone on to do a certificate in catering in an adult learning environment she enjoyed, had a job, and was very clear that her early life circumstance was not to be a major deterrent in her future. We remember the young people who had only recently come to live in the Territory from interstate and were delighted with their new teachers, good facilities, and positive support.

3. At times, though, we saw and heard the opposite. We heard about poor attendance, too many school age people who had had little or no education and did not seem to care. Young people who were at school, but said it was irrelevant to them, offering nothing interesting or meaningful other than a chance to see their friends, be warm in winter and cool in the Wet Season, sometimes feel safer there, and maybe have something to eat. We heard about young people dealing with massive trauma on a daily basis, like the young person who said to their teacher that they wanted to 'chuck their best clothes in the bin' because in the last three months they had worn them to six funerals of family members who had died by violence. We were told in no uncertain terms that *secondary education in the Territory has failed Aboriginal people. You need to start again – go back to the people.*

4.   We have done this in our review. We have gone back to the people of the Territory to find out. We asked each group of young people, *What are the good things, and what are the not so good things, about your secondary school? What can we do to make the good things better, and fix up the others?* We have collected a mass of information, and many good ideas for solutions, from families, teachers, administrators, employers, and the young people themselves, and we have gathered these together in this report.

5.   We were greatly impressed with the quality of the young people on the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians who saw the biggest challenge to secondary education as being *to ensure that the idea of 'with wealth comes privilege' does not influence schools and colleges in their approach with students.* That it has in the NT is clearly evident in terms of the good facilities in urban areas and the often abysmal conditions under which young people have to learn on communities some distance from a major centre. The Round Table gave us many good ideas, but more importantly convinced us we were on the right track in the new directions for the Territory we were proposing.

6.   Young people are clear that they want a range of pathways and they want more information on their path to a worthwhile livelihood. They sometimes see more clearly than we do that each young person is different, and the older they are the more different they become. This is so obvious that we question why it had not been taken seriously enough before in education. Where it was being taken seriously, with effective pedagogy taking into account individual learning styles and motivations, we saw much productive learning. Yet we still saw the spectre of the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) and university entrance denying for some young people legitimate paths to a future that does not involve university, at least at this stage of their lives.

7.   The purpose of secondary education has changed from being a sorting mechanism for university, put firmly in place in the 1950s, to a much more holistic approach to prepare young people for their future, whatever that may be. And the range of futures available now to young people is so much vaster than even a decade ago. They want to explore options we haven't even thought of yet. For example, schools should be at the forefront of dealing with the opportunities and pathways arising from the knowledge revolution. Yet the use of computers and other media in schools is well behind their use in other parts of the community, and the young people who regularly use various forms of ICT in other aspects of their daily lives are increasingly frustrated by the lack of it in their schooling.

8.   In our discussions with young people they were clearly attracted to experiences they saw as relating to a 'real world' that they saw as existing outside schools. They wanted

work experience, vocational learning, the opportunity to camp and climb and experience the natural environment, play sport, make and share music and art, design and carry through a project that changed some aspect of the world they were inhabiting. They wanted activities they undertook outside of school, where they showed leadership, or developed skills and knowledge, to be counted in their learning record. Above all they sought respect, to be dealt with as young adults with ideas that are well worth pursuing, even though those ideas might be often raw and embryonic.

9.   In our review we have put young people at the centre of our deliberations; our concern has not been what would be best for the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), for example in terms of accountability or system administration, nor the school, for example the hours it is open and accessible to young people, nor teachers in terms of their conditions, nor governments in terms of costs, nor even the government versus non-government school debate. These issues are important of course, but all must serve young people and their parents or caregivers. What we propose will not necessarily make life easier for these groups, but we believe it will make the future brighter and better for the young people of the Territory, and in the process all those mentioned will feel they have achieved something great.

10.   We have endeavoured to avoid the trap of blaming the victim, or to fall prey to the myths about failing in education that stem from the classic negative views of
- *predictability*, that is there is no escape for some children from the cycle of violence or neglect that overwhelms them
- *irreparable damage*, where young people are so injured by what has happened to them already that there is no hope
- *labelling*, where using the term 'Indigenous' or 'dysfunctional family' excuses an absence of learning
- *who cares*, that is, no matter what is tried, it will make little difference to the final outcome.

11.   There are so many exceptions to statements like these that we need to find out more about why so many young people have shown the resilience to escape their circumstances—a good teacher developing skills and raising aspirations, an opportunity given, natural skills and abilities allowed to flourish, support from a valued person, a pathway explored, a pressure to attend school. Above all, these young people need time from dedicated adults prepared to help them learn, work through personal and family issues. As one Indigenous parent said, we need to acknowledge and support
> *the emotional intelligence training that kids get from their family, for example in dealing with loss and grief: where do they get the resilience to deal with what happens to them? And when it's not available from the family, the community can always tell you who the people are, in it, who are respected elders who can help.*

This applies right across the spectrum, regardless of race, culture or lifestyle.

12.   For young people who might attract the labels above, it is critically important that they attend school, are taught by the very best teachers, using techniques that will bring about effective learning, in facilities and using materials suited to their level of maturity and skill. We saw or heard of young adults being taught English literacy by primary trained teachers using primary school pedagogy, with books designed for eight year olds. We also saw and heard of committed teachers with a sound knowledge of how young people learn, using what they had at hand or created for themselves, to teach English as a second language in exciting and productive ways. Where we did, we could see the difference, in the possibility of relevant pathways opening up.

13.   Young people told us about finding the transition from primary to secondary school difficult; Year 10 a trial because they did not know of, or did not experience the alternative pathways that were available; and the transition to adulthood often providing the opportunity for failure to be identified, rather than being given positive alternatives more suited to the young person's abilities and aspirations. We see these transition years not so much as the end of an important period of learning, but as a beginning of the next stage in their lives.

14.   We have endeavoured to build what we say in the review on evidence—from submissions, consultations and meetings with stakeholders, the literature on secondary schooling, our Reference Group representing various stakeholders, and particularly from what the young people say about their lives. Yet an evidence-based report is necessarily focused on the past – what has happened, rather than what should happen. What are the Territory's values about education and particularly the future directions and experiences appropriate for our young people? To walk down this path we have identified, and put at the start of most chapters of this report, a series of statements that guided us in our writing and analysis of the data. Our core principle was that whatever we recommended, it must have the potential to improve the learning and lives of young Territorians.

15.   We see a concern for quality as being the only way to address the issues arising from our core principle and the labels listed above: quality schools, quality teachers, and quality teaching of quality curriculum. Above all, we see quality teaching or pedagogy at the core of delivering to young people what they need to improve their learning. This is fundamental to the improvements we seek, and we propose that the changes we want to see are built from this base. In a world where 'one size fits all' no longer applies (if it ever did), especially at secondary school, we believe decisions about what young people should learn, the process by which they learn and the pathways down which they travel to

learn should be made close to the students and their parents. We recognise that learning is a journey, not a destination, and it helps to have quality guides along the way.

16. So we make recommendations about how to achieve quality and how good teaching may be sustained, no matter where or when it is occurring. The schools and their communities should determine what support they need, and call it in. The schools and their staff need to be held accountable for what they do, and for assisting parents and students to know how well they are doing. When they leave school, young people need to have a path mapped out, a path that is realistic, and one they have had a hand in mapping and to which they agree. So there will be different paths, and these need to be linked effectively so that schooling is one relatively seamless set of opportunities for learning provided for young people. This in effect is the *new territory* we have tried to open up in this review.

The overall task

17. The challenge to the review team is to advise the NT Government on the ways secondary education should respond to present and future need. Placed as it is between primary school and work, further study before work, or other community participation, and directed at young people very different from those for whom secondary schools were designed decades ago, the task could not just be one to 'fiddle at the edges' of current approaches. Changes are needed that will provide education and training to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's young people, not those of yesterday. Not that the good things that are occurring within the old framework should be cast aside; rather, the team saw it as important to create a climate and a structure where good things can flourish, and the tired approaches of yesterday will wither and die away.

18. The team has therefore made young people the core of our thinking. What are they like? What do they want to do? What do they need to prepare them for their next step? How do we adults take into account and assist them through the large number of life's transitions that they face? Transitions such as from family member to a separate life, from non-driver to driver, from child sport to adult sport, from adolescent to adult, from school to work, from non-voter to voter – all very different from those experienced by their parents. It is much harder now to be an adolescent than it has been for the past fifty years. In parallel, the roles of teachers have expanded, altered, and become more difficult and challenging over the same period. Education is what gives direction and purpose, providing opportunities to develop characteristics that will allow young people to build on strengths or overcome weaknesses, whatever direction they may take.

19.　　We have to provide levels of engagement, as skill and knowledge are acquired, that will equip all young people with the tools to achieve a satisfying future. We have to give them the chance to grow up, to experience who they are, learn to have fun, overcome boredom, learn how to operate in adult society, develop their individual talents. The review team has come to the not unexpected conclusion that all of this is a shared responsibility of parents, family and caregivers, teachers and the school, the education system together with other service agencies, and the wider society, as well as the young people themselves. So this became our task—how can the secondary education system and its schools, be prepared for this role of guiding young people to take up their responsibilities in the century ahead?

20.　　The Northern Territory Government gave the team the following tasks as the basis for the enquiry

- produce a profile of the secondary student cohort in the NT
- assess the comparability of outcomes achieved by urban and remote secondary students
- review existing policy, planning procedures and accountability measures
- identify and assess internal and external impacts on secondary provision
- identify opportunities for expanding pathways, particularly in VET
- identify options for future secondary education provision
- prepare plans that detail implementation strategies.

The terms of reference are detailed as Appendix A.

21.　　In announcing these terms of reference, the Chief Minister, The Hon. Clare Martin, said that she wanted to know how well the Territory's secondary schools compared with those in other states and how well secondary education is being delivered to young Indigenous people on communities. The team has given considerable thought to these issues, and following its extensive consultations and from submissions gathered from around the NT, can be somewhat re-assuring about the first, but except in a few lighthouse instances, concerned about the second. We address both in this report. The Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Employment, Education and Training, The Hon. Syd Stirling, expressed his view that *everything was up for examination*, and he expected the outcomes of the review to take secondary education in the Territory forward in a direction that will fully support developments in the NT as a whole.

22.　　Society wants young people to stay at school as long as it provides productive learning and prepares them for a satisfying future. The core aim is for them to remain until their next step is clear and they are prepared for a productive future in their community, which might include a continuation of relevant learning, learning and work, or work where they learn on the job. Our challenge is to make secondary education attractive enough

not to lose those who might otherwise drop out, never enter the work force, or lead lives involving anti-social behaviour or self-harm.

23.   To give some understanding of the size of the task, secondary education in some form is provided in more than 60 Government and non-Government schools in the Northern Territory to around 12 000 students in urban and rural settings. As the preamble to the terms of reference states

there are junior secondary schools in urban settings providing for students in Years 7-10, comprehensive secondary schools catering for students in Years 8-12, and senior colleges with students in Years 11 and 12 only; an open education centre providing distance education services for secondary students; area schools which include the primary years as well as students in Years 8-10; and an assortment of schools in remote communities providing post-primary and secondary education, depending on the needs of the students in those communities.

Nor should we forget the non-Government sector, boarding schools often directed at Indigenous students, and those who move out of the Territory for their education. A diverse system indeed!

24.   In an effort to come to terms with this diversity, the review team consisting of representatives of Charles Darwin University (the newly re-named Northern Territory University), the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training, and a small group of independent consultants, undertook a comprehensive series of school visits and meetings with stakeholders. In addition, submissions were called for and a review of relevant national and international educational literature was undertaken. The processes used are detailed in Appendix D. The team received 111 submissions, and visited 134 sites across the Territory, which included 40 consultation visits to remote Indigenous communities, as well as meetings with representatives of stakeholder groups, and public forums in each urban centre.

25.   In parallel with this process has been the active involvement of a Steering Committee, which had the responsibility to make certain that the review team adequately addressed the terms of reference, and delivered on time and within budget. In addition, a Reference Group was established consisting of nominees of the various stakeholder bodies to provide input to the review team. The Reference Group adopted an active approach to identifying issues consistent with the terms of reference and provided important documentation for the consideration of the review team. Most importantly, individual members of the group provided advice from their sectors. Two joint meetings of the Steering Committee and the Reference Group were also held to explore issues, and to sound out ideas. Membership and terms of reference of the Steering Committee are attached as Appendix B, and the Reference Group as Appendix C.

26.   Consulting with young people in schools and in the wider community was an integral part of the process of consultation – the team held discussions students in every school we visited, with the Chief Minister's Youth Round Table and employed a consultant experienced with young people who were not engaging with the education system, to meet with them and to advise us of their needs. In addition, there was a check on the validity of what we propose by having discussions with an external team of experts.

27.   The review team must say early in this report that there were many comments during consultations that the NT secondary education system is in crisis. This is not our view. We saw examples where young people could do better, but we were much more impressed with the opportunities young people had to achieve success. Although some of the matters we discuss may seem negative, in many ways the Territory exhibits a heightened version of the social crises that most of the Western world is now experiencing in terms of disaffected youth, the changed nature of work and life choices, as well as the impacts of global digital communication and technology. As a small, isolated, relatively less affluent part of Australia having the highest proportion of Indigenous people in the country and with a greater cultural mix of people than any other, the Territory's problems are more public and sharply defined than elsewhere.

28.   Even so, with these attributes of small size, geographic spread, and cultural difference, the NT has opportunities to lead the way nationally in resolving some of these issues. The review team has seen responses to some of these challenges that provide exciting and innovative solutions, currently in place or being put in place by caring, concerned individuals who build their progress on the basis of mutual respect. New initiatives are being tested, and we are confident some ground breaking solutions have been and will continue to be the outcome, provided people are given the flexibility to use resources to their best effect, within clear parameters set by the Government. An issue for the review, however, was that so many of the good things we saw tended to be *ad hoc*, in response to local circumstances, rather than being part of a coherent plan, whether at school or system level. What is needed is for schools to be innovative and responsive to local circumstances in a planned, tested and sustained way, and so be able to impact more effectively on student learning.

The nature of the secondary cohort

29.   Today's secondary students are at a special stage in their lives where everything is changing very quickly. They have high levels of energy that manifest in many ways, emphasising a real need to be doing things—bush walking, camping, rock climbing, playing sport, painting, drawing, performing, constructing, physical activities of all kinds counteracted by the growing numbers who spend large amounts of time playing computer

games and other e-based activity. Sitting in a classroom being talked at, or where what is expected of students is confined to workbooks, is not easily managed by most 12–15 year-old young people, and is incompatible with their stage of development and the way most people learn these days.

30.   They aspire to be adults, and wish to be treated as such, but at times lapse into the most childish of behaviour, as do we all. They respond well when they are treated with respect, care and trust, and where their views of the world are taken seriously, as do we all. They like to see the value in what they do, and are keen to contribute to some end that they see as worthwhile, as do we all. They are open to be engaged in learning and respond best to those opportunities when they are treated as adults and see the task has some purpose, as do we all.

31.   Young people of secondary age have a heightened awareness of their rights, sometimes at the expense of the rights of others, but have less of an understanding or acknowledgement of their responsibilities. They can be highly assertive, and even aggressive in their relationship with adults and each other. This is often a reflection of how differences are dealt with at home, in the playground and on film and television, on video games. There is a tendency to be contemptuous of and bored by adults who try to assume an authority over them that they see as unearned, and who have values very different from those of their peers, or those portrayed in the media. Many say they are bored, but do not know how to escape their boredom, and can resort to anti-social behaviour including substance misuse or abuse. They have grown up in a 'click and go' contemporary culture that delivers fast new stimulation in an interactive learning mode. They are often more computer and technologically literate than the adults around them.

32.   Compared with other states, many young people in the Territory are highly mobile, transient, and geographically isolated. On television, they see a world very different from the one they are experiencing. They may see little purpose in school, and many do not have the levels of English literacy and numeracy required to succeed at secondary level. Many Indigenous males are initiated as men right in the middle of normal secondary schooling and naturally expect to be treated like adults, not children. Girls may become women and mothers at about the same time and schools do not adjust easily to having teenage mothers or adult men in their classes. Dropping out becomes a likely option.

33.   On the other hand, because of its small population size, the Territory offers young people more opportunities for leadership, community service, and diverse extra curricular or extended curriculum experiences than is available to most of their counterparts in large cities in the other states and territories.

34.	Many young people do conform to adult expectations and thrive on or at least accept what is offered at school. They can become increasingly frustrated by those learning with them who do not share their values of obtaining as much as they can from school as a passport to their future careers. They see the advantages of a good education. Why should those who want to learn put up with those who do not, take so much of the teacher's time, and generally make school a place where productive learning at any time is hard won?

35.	The question must be asked: why should young people go to school? Well, there are community expectations: we did it, so should they. It keeps them off the streets at least, but more positively allows them to achieve the sort of knowledge they will need to function effectively in society. To make sure that young adolescents do come to school, there are laws of compulsion, but in some communities these are now more honoured in the breach than the observance. There is little profit in forcing a reluctant learner with no sense of achievement to stay on at school. Other states are addressing the issue of compulsion and school leaving age and no review of secondary education would be complete without some position being taken on this issue.

36.	Even so, there are important intrinsic reasons for young people to want to go to and stay on at school. They develop friends and useful networks, and relationships with other people and particularly the teachers they value while they are there. There is a sense of belonging to the school community that is important to young people. It gives, particularly to those with less than adequate homes, food, warmth, shelter and safety or at least a sense of security. School provides interesting things for them to do, alleviates their boredom, making them want to learn, and leading them to aspire to achieve the 'good things in life' they desire. Schools can nourish a strong sense of identity and knowledge of our cultural heritage, as well as an understanding of what academic and vocational achievement means.

Schooling as a continuum

37.	Coming as it does after primary and before adulthood, lying somewhere in the middle of a continuum of learning that leads from unknowing child to knowledgeable contributing adult, secondary education has a responsibility to help make all young people well qualified to earn a living and/or live sustainable productive lives. The community expects its young people to be socially well-adjusted; able to draw from and contribute to our society as well as to grow as healthy and fulfilled human beings through a process of lifelong learning. Yet only some pass easily along this continuum and rarely is secondary education seen as the fundamental link to the world of adultness.

38.   In contrast, rather than traversing smooth learning 'ramps' or 'pathways', many young people find their secondary education to be a mosaic—a series of discrete periods where many significant life events occur together, at the end of which quantum steps have to be taken. In the past, secondary education was designed for one major pathway, a rather steep ramp to higher education, with jump off points for those not suited to or able to profit from such a journey. Most teachers were trained to assist young people along this one major highway, and have since found it difficult to become guides along the range of new pathways, many of which can intersect, that are now needed. Many find it hard to make the shift in emphasis to enterprise or vocational learning and work experience as key components, so that they can help all young people remain on a fulfilling learning journey for the rest of their lives.

39.   The learning pathway for most young people cannot be built on an assumption that learning will be pursued 'for its own sake'. The learning must have immediate satisfying outcomes, as well as promising a better world for the individual 'somewhere down the track'. Many young people cannot be motivated by the projected advantages of the long term – they need outcomes relevant to them, and if they are not available, school becomes irrelevant. The 'light at the end of the tunnel' or the 'pot of gold at the end of the rainbow' have little impact on young people when their parents have little vision of these, where they want to experience those aspects of modern life that money will buy. So often school seems no part of the 'real world' they inhabit. The challenge is to provide a curriculum with attendant pedagogy that is relevant, yet encourages them to explore the unknown in a way that prevents young people rejecting it.

40.   The transition from secondary school to the world of adulthood can be difficult for many young people. When should it occur? What pathways and ramps are needed? Who has the responsibility to guide the process? What is the role of the school? Where do employers fit in? What new form of education is needed to take the young people further? Is it 'on the job training', or vocational education or university education, or a mixture of all three? What do we know about the young person and what do the young people know about themselves to make sound choices about future directions? What choices can they make if there are no jobs available, as for example, on many communities? The challenge for secondary education is to answer some of these questions in order to position young people to see a life ahead that is positive and productive.

Some issues of futures for the NT

41.   The current cohort in the NT's secondary schools will be adults in NT society over the next five years. To all intent that means now. They will be part of the proposed run to statehood, and will have cause to reflect on where their new state is headed. They will

vote, drive cars, find part or full time work or some other way to participate in their community, play sport, write, paint, dance, sing, socialise, set up their own living spaces, experiment with their lives in many ways, and through it all try to make ends meet. Many would like to establish their own small enterprise, but will find they cannot because they lack capital and know too little because schools rarely have people who can develop skills in this area. More jobs will be part time, with job sharing and flexible hours. More work will be in an increasingly sophisticated ICT and e-learning environment, with computers becoming a major way of communicating between people and their communities. Nonetheless, underpinning it all will remain a need to be able to have positive and effective inter-personal communication skills, no matter what environment the young people find themselves in.

42. There is an increasing Indigenous population living on communities where establishing sustainable livelihoods and work are frequently stated as major priorities but in reality seem little more than a distant dream. People want their culture and language to be strong and their children to have a mainstream education so they may be engaged in meaningful and remunerated, or at least fulfilling, activities.

Legislation, governance and policy

43. The fundamental reason for legislation, governance and policy is to enable systems of education, and in this case secondary education, to operate effectively and to provide for accountability for its quality to the wider community and the Territory as a whole. In the end the legislation and attendant policy must allow good schools to flourish, good teachers to teach effectively, and students to achieve the very best they can, leaving school well equipped to take the next steps in their lives. The current NT legislation provides a framework for secondary education to be accessible to all. The Act is to make

provision for the availability of education to all people of the Northern Territory and in particular to provide for the access of all children to education programmes appropriate to their individual needs and abilities.

44. If the review team were to make some assessment, we would say the system tries hard to make education available to all, but is not able to provide access for all children of secondary school age. Fundamental to this review is a belief already entrenched in the Act that it is a right for all young people in the Territory to have access to relevant quality education. In terms of facilities, the review team has observed that Territory schools in urban areas are among some of the best in Australia. Secondary education on some of the Indigenous communities is among some of the worst. This is not all the fault of the system. In many communities, it was hard to see any evidence that the community itself welcomed the education that was provided, sustained it, and gave it the very highest priority to occupy the time of young people and to provide the appropriate opportunities

for learning. Secondary education is an investment in the future human capital of the Territory and will repay itself through dividends in expanded enterprise development and particularly, reduced social dysfunction. Issues faced by young people in the complex and highly differentiated NT society, for example between regional and urban environments, are multi-faceted and are best resolved by a 'whole-of-Government' or *integrated services approach*, where the various agencies combine with education to offer a single response at the local level.

45.   Schools are not apart from the communities they serve, but integral to them. They can only be a right when the community sees that they have a mutual responsibility to support them, sustain them, and expect them to be strong. The community serves the school as much as the school serves the community. They are places where people learn—the young adolescents as students, the teachers and other staff as they work with their students and the community, the older people as parents and custodians of the young, and the community as a whole. They should be providing the widest possible range of learning opportunities.

Pedagogy and curriculum

46.   All young people have unique strengths and abilities that can be drawn out through learning programs designed to meet their individual needs and to achieve the skills and knowledge to create healthy, happy, sustainable futures. In schools where this is the obvious aim, there is little dysfunction, little chalk and talk, and much activity as the students go about their learning tasks in an environment of mutual respect. It is not only what teachers do that is so important; it is also what teachers can motivate their students to do.

47.   The role of teachers, how they are led and how they are prepared to undertake their pedagogical tasks is fundamental to successful learning and provides the mark of a good school. Strong leadership, effective communication and sound teamwork underpin quality education, whether at class, school or system level. Leadership training is essential as is the need to attract, develop, and retain staff with a passion and commitment to achieving quality secondary education.

48.   The review team supports and encourages the diversity in schooling it saw, and particularly in pedagogy. However, we could not be sure of the extent of the learning that was occurring. Parents in their submissions and discussions wanted to know how well their child was performing, not just at specific times, but also in an ongoing sense. Students and parents have the right to know where their child fits and the level of

outcomes they have achieved against personal, Territory, and national benchmarks at regular intervals during their school career.

49.   We are entering a knowledge revolution with information available from anywhere in the world over the Internet. The schools in the Territory are all connected via the LATIS system, which should enable effective communication among them. Although the system is having teething problems that are addressed elsewhere in this report, the technology is there to provide inter-teacher and inter-school communication and on-line learning for both teachers and students. The review team is confident that many of the learning needs of young people at a secondary level and of their teachers can be met or supplemented through Information and Communications Technology (ICT), adding to but not completely replacing the face-to-face pedagogies of the teacher.

50.   The demands on staff, and teachers in particular, are changing, requiring responses at school and system levels, and among institutions that prepare and upgrade the skills of teachers. Teachers exercise responsibilities wider than their own discipline, having to understand the demands of learning across a range of fields and be adept in a range of teaching and delivery modes. They develop partnerships with a range of people from business, government agencies and community organisations. Importantly, teachers have to be experts in managing learning processes, and designing environments that acknowledge the range of learning needs and styles of their students in different contexts, some in school, some out of school. Teachers are expected to develop in their students the capacity to learn throughout their lives in a range of contexts, as well as content in the here and now. They are required to assess and report student outcomes across many aspects of learning. They recognise and work comfortably with multiple intelligences, and deal with issues of physical, social, artistic, emotional, and interpersonal development. Working with them to achieve the best results for their students are other professionals and para-professionals with different skills and varied needs of the young people of today. Complexity indeed.

The review as a process of change: future directions
51   The review should be seen as part of a process of positive change that has been occurring in the Territory over the whole time of its existence. Many good initiatives have occurred in the past, and continue to be implemented. This report is intended to build on those positives by initiating a process to change key aspects of secondary education, including how it is organised, how its quality may be better monitored, how students may be further encouraged to learn, and how teaching may be further supported.

52.   To achieve better outcomes for all young people, we propose ways for the enhancing of multiple pathways for all young people, to provide opportunities for the maximum number of realistic options for their lives. We propose to deal with the wide span of learning required in secondary school, and the very different pedagogies needed to appeal to young secondary students, as compared with those approaching adulthood.

53.   We look closely at the delivery of education, whether it be on communities, in towns or urban centres. We suggest mechanisms to provide the best possible support to young people and their learning, using a range of methods, including ICT and distance learning modes.

54.   We return to the issue of quality many times in the report: the quality of curriculum, of teachers and teaching, and of the schools themselves. To assist in guaranteeing quality in all education settings, we discuss ways to build capacity not only at the school level, but also in the various systems and DEET itself. Improving school leadership will improve schools.

55.   We also propose legislative changes so that our proposals may be put in place. We address issues of compulsion and school attendance and relationships with the Commonwealth Government to improve delivery of education in remote communities. Most importantly, we propose that a new education act be developed, more in keeping with the educational needs of the 21st Century, and particularly in the context of the possible establishment of the Northern Territory as a new state.

56.   In preparing our report, the review team took the fullest possible account of the evidence gathered to show the ways forward to improve the quality of secondary education in the Territory. The report is ambitious and builds on the many good things that have already been achieved in secondary education in the NT. Because it comes between primary education and young adulthood, we have had to make suggestions about the whole system. These we see as consequences of the evidence we have gathered about the current situation. Changes in one part of education must of necessity affect other parts of the system, and it is impossible to change one part without change elsewhere. Even so, we believe our proposals will make the whole system of education in the Territory more effective at all levels. We would warn, however, that if the report is not acted on, and quickly, things could deteriorate to the point where the action needed would become highly traumatic for all concerned. The issues to be faced are challenging, and time is running out if measured change is to be effective.

CHAPTER 2
THE PROFILE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

1.   As part of its terms of reference, the review team was to produce a profile of the secondary student cohort in the Northern Territory, to describe current education provision, and the outcomes being achieved. We were also to find out how well these students achieve, compared with those in other parts of Australia.

2.   This chapter provides an overview of secondary education in the Northern Territory. The data we present describes the base on which the review's recommendations for secondary education in the Territory should be built. However, the picture we paint is not as complete as it might be. At the commencement of the review we were advised frankly by Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) that much of the data that would enable us to respond fully to these terms of reference, was not available. We were given the fullest cooperation by DEET in our quest, but a lack of essential data has proven to be the case. Nevertheless, the information that follows does provide a useful backdrop for the chapters that follow.

3.   Included in this chapter are statistical descriptions of the Territory population, the secondary student cohort, and the educational outcomes being achieved. It also provides information about schools, their staffing, infrastructure, and the outlay of financial resources.

The Northern Territory and its population

4.   While the Northern Territory's 1 346 200 square kilometres occupy 17% of the Australian land mass, its 198 000 inhabitants represent only one per cent of the country's population (ABS, 2003a). Just under 12 000 of these inhabitants are the secondary age young people at the core of this review. They live in a part of Australia that has the smallest population and the lowest population density, and, as shown in Table 1, the youngest population, the highest proportion of Indigenous people, the highest level of transience, and the largest proportion of its population living in remote areas.

Table 1   Demographic comparisons between the NT and national data, 2002

	NT(%)	National(%)
Population under 15 yrs	25.7	20.3
Proportion of population Indigenous	28.7	2.3
Annual Interstate mobility/yrs	9.1	2.0
Proportion of population in remote	50.0	3.0

5.   The Territory is notable for its 'remoteness' in general and the 'very remote' characteristics of a large proportion of the population as a whole. Nearly half of its population lives in what the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) classifies as 'remote' or 'very remote' areas, compared to three per cent of people nationally, and the remainder, including those in Darwin and Alice Springs, reside in 'outer regional Australia' according to national location definitions (ABS, 2002). The large majority of Territorians – approximately 80% – live in the six urban and regional centres of Darwin, Palmerston, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. In our view, the dramatic difference in the proportion of the population remotely situated in the Territory, as compared with other states, generates government and management issues that are core to decision making in the NT, but peripheral in other jurisdictions. This is certainly true in secondary education provision, and underlies much of the focus of this report.

6.   A high level of transience characterises the Northern Territory, with eight to ten per cent of the population moving interstate or into the NT each year. In each of the five years to June 2002, an average 9.1% of the population moved, compared with a national average of two per cent (Northern Territory Economy, Budget Overview 2003-04). This high level of transience means that young people come in to Territory schools from all over Australia in much higher proportions than occurs in other states and the Australian Capital Territory. A high level of intra-territory transience parallels this external transience as well.

7.   Not only is the Territory population small, young, transient, geographically isolated and dispersed, it is also culturally diverse. Approximately 31% of Territorians speak a language other than English at home. Of these, half speak Australian Indigenous languages.

8.   The Northern Territory has by far the highest proportion of Indigenous people who represent 29% of the population. Of these, 39% are aged 15 years or under, which is a much higher proportion than the Territory as a whole at 26%, and the national figure of 20%. This high proportion of Indigenous young people is largely a product of high fertility and much lower life expectancy among the Indigenous population (ABS, 2003b).

9.   It is critical to the Territory's future, and therefore to this review, to note that this demographically young and rapidly expanding Indigenous population has responsibility, through the Land Rights Act, for custodianship of 85% of the Territory coastline and half of the total Territory land mass. This clearly has implications for Territory education, because as they fulfil responsibilities for 'caring for country' and progress towards

economic independence and self-reliance, Indigenous people will find it increasingly necessary to access and engage with Western knowledge systems.
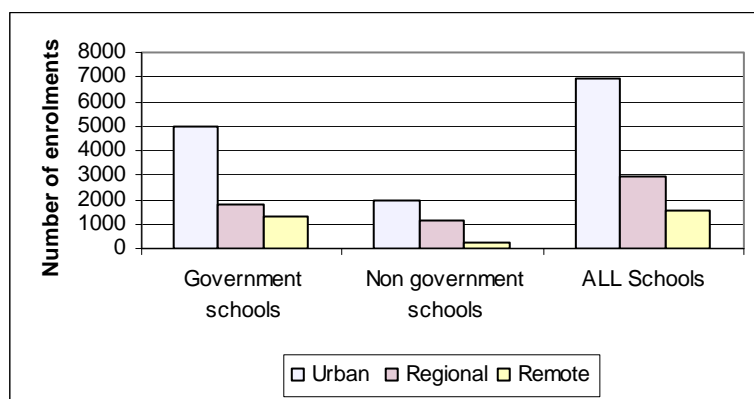
10. Providing a quality education in this dispersed, isolated part of Australia that has the highest proportion of Indigenous people in the country and a greater cultural mix than anywhere else, presents significant challenges that are not faced at such a universal level by any other Australian states and territories.

The secondary student cohort

All students

11. There are 11 730 secondary aged students[2] enrolled in Northern Territory schools. Approximately 11 420 are in mainstream schools (government and non-government), of these 880 are also enrolled at the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) for one or more subjects. A further 240 students are enrolled in NTOEC only, and another 70 are enrolled in special schools. As Figure 1 shows, nearly 80% of enrolments are in urban and major regional centres.

Figure 1   Secondary school enrolments by location, 2002

Source: DEET, 2002a

12. According to DEET, over the last five years secondary school enrolments have remained constant. The proportion of males and females in the secondary age population is about equal, but by Year 12 male enrolments comprise about 45% of the cohort.

13. Nearly 39% of the total student enrolment in NT government schools (primary and secondary) is Indigenous, compared with other states and territories where Indigenous students represent only 5% or fewer of the student population (SCRCSSP, 2003).

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[2] For the purposes of this report secondary age is defined as 13 to 17 years.

14.   Indigenous students represent 32% of secondary school enrolments in the Territory, with government schools having a slightly lower proportion at 31% than non-government schools at 34% (DEET, 2002a). Demographic trends demonstrate clearly that both the number and proportion of Indigenous people of secondary schooling age are increasing, and will continue to increase into the foreseeable future.

15.   With few exceptions, nearly all secondary-aged students in remote areas are Indigenous. In contrast, in urban and regional secondary schools the proportions of Indigenous student enrolments range from 6% to 50% (DEET, 2002a). It is estimated that some 3 500 or more secondary aged young people in the Territory do not attend school (more than 20% of the secondary-aged population) and the majority of these are likely to be young people living in remote areas. Some of them may well be studying VET, or working, but no statistics are available to verify this.

Young people with special needs

16.   Teachers and schools service a population of young people with a much higher level of special needs than found elsewhere in Australia. Many of these need English as a Second Language (ESL) support. There are also those with disabilities of various kinds, those affected by health and well-being issues, particularly Indigenous young people, and a number who are challenged by homelessness.
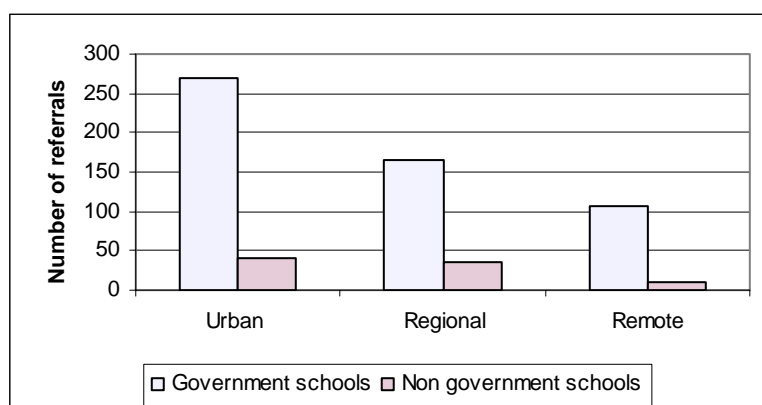
English as a Second Language (ESL)

17.   In the Territory, 23% of secondary students enrolled in government and non-government schools are classified as being ESL learners (DEET, 2002b). Indigenous students make up 83% of the total number of ESL students in all primary and secondary government schools, with 68% of these attending remote schools.

18.   At a national level this group of students is referred to as being from 'language backgrounds other than English' (LBOTE). National data available across school education as a whole show that the national average for LBOTE students is 17%, and that the Northern Territory has 32%, almost double the national average (SCRCSSP, 2003). While some of the NT students may be recent arrivals to Australia, or international students, the majority are Indigenous, and a large proportion of these students live in non-English speaking communities.

Students with disabilities

19.   Based on referrals to DEET's Student Services Branch, in 2002 there were 630 secondary students in NT schools identified as having special needs (Figure 2).

Figure 2   Number of special needs referrals to Student Services Branch (DEET) in the Northern Territory, 2002

20.   National data show that in 2001 the NT had the highest proportion (13%) of students with disabilities, compared with four per cent nationally (SCRCSSP, 2003). Even if some of this difference could be explained by the fact that the criteria used to define disability vary between jurisdictions, it is reasonable to assume that significant contributing factors in the Territory are the poorer health status of people living outside the main urban and regional centres, and the high proportion of Indigenous students with conductive hearing loss.

Indigenous health issues

21.   While the health status of the majority of Territorians compares favourably with that of other Australians, it is well documented that the Indigenous population has not shared equally in the improved health outcomes of the majority (Condon *et al.*, 2001). According to a health issues survey of secondary schools conducted in 2003 for the Learning Lessons implementation team, 82% of schools that responded reported they have students with hearing problems, and 76% reported they have students with nutritional problems. Other main health issues cited were skin infections, hygiene, welfare, mental health, substance abuse, and tiredness. The School Action Plans of 47% of these schools identified health issues as a focus area.

Youth homelessness

22.   A recent study showed that the Northern Territory has by far the highest rate of homelessness for the youth population in Australia (Table 2).

Table 2   **Estimated number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 and rate of homelessness per 1 000 of the youth population, by state and territory**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Number of homeless	6 242	4 663	6 381	2 394	3 508	1 008	400	1 464	26 040
Rate per 1 000	10	10	18	17	18	21	13	69	14

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2002

23.   Three-quarters of the homeless young people in the NT are Indigenous, and about 70% of that group are in remote communities where issues of domestic violence, alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing are major contributing factors to Indigenous young people becoming detached and transient. If the homeless students in remote communities are removed from the Territory total, then the rate of homelessness is significantly reduced to 16 per 1 000, about the same as Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2002).

Attendance, retention and achievement

24.   While the majority of NT students satisfactorily complete their secondary education, the fact is that the Northern Territory's overall performance is below that of other jurisdictions on a number of measures, including literacy and numeracy. For many students, irregular attendance impacts on their ability to achieve expected levels of educational outcomes, and fewer Territory young people stay on to complete their senior secondary education than in other parts of the country.

Enrolment and attendance

25.   As described earlier in this chapter, there are almost 12 000 secondary aged students enrolled in Northern Territory schools, with close to 80% of these being in urban and major regional centres. There are also numbers of secondary aged students not enrolled in any form of schooling, but we have been unable to establish an accurate figure.

26.   Of the senior secondary student cohort, 11% are enrolled part-time in their studies, compared to 3% nationally (SCRCSSP 2003). This considerable variation is largely due to the flexibility of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) that allows this pattern of study in the senior years. The review team talked to many young people who for personal or financial reasons combine secondary schooling with a substantial component of part-time employment.

27.   For young people actually enrolled at a secondary school, the attendance rate is
        about 85% for government schools and 87% for non-government schools. The
        Indigenous attendance rate for government schools is 74% and 80% for non-government
        schools. However, these figures mask large differences in attendance patterns between
        urban and regional schools on the one hand and 'the bush' on the other. While the
        attendance rate in urban and regional schools is nearly 90%, the secondary attendance
        rate in remote areas is only about 60% (DEET, 2002a).

Retention

28.   The national average apparent retention rate[3] of full-time students from the
        commencement of school to Year 10 is 98% (SCRCSSP, 2003). The Northern Territory
        rate is well below this, at 82%, and is the lowest in the country. The Territory also has the
        lowest apparent retention rate to Year 10 for Indigenous students at 58%.

29.   For full-time students from Year 10 to Year 12, the national average apparent
        retention rate is 78%, while the NT's rate is 65%, again the lowest in Australia
        (SCRCSSP, 2003). However, the Territory's apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year
        12 for Indigenous students is 45%, and this is a similar figure to the national average,
        although given the low completion rate to Year 10, this figure should be treated with
        caution.

30.   NT DEET has recognised that enrolment, attendance and retention are significant
        issues for many students and is working to address this through the development and
        implementation of a Student Enrolment, Attendance and Retention Strategy.

Comparability of outcomes

31.   While many Territory young people achieve well at school, the challenges faced by a
        significant proportion of the secondary cohort would be expected to impact on the
        performance of NT students as a whole and the average level of outcomes they achieve.
        The high proportion of young people poorly positioned to undertake secondary schooling
        would explain at least in part why the Northern Territory does not perform as well as other
        jurisdictions on a number of educational outcomes measures.

32.   Even so there is at one end of the NT's secondary student cohort a group of
        academically able and inclined students working towards their Northern Territory

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[3] Apparent retention rates estimate the percentage of full time students who continue from a specified year level to a
higher year level. The term 'apparent' is used because no adjustments are made for migration, student movements
between jurisdictions or students repeating year levels.

Certificate of Education (NTCE) and a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) who reach these goals, go on to university and perform as well as any students from any other parts of Australia. At the other end is a group who do not have the levels of English literacy and numeracy required to achieve the expected outcomes at the secondary level. There is also a group in the middle part of the cohort aiming for a TER whose performance is substantially lower than that of their counterparts in South Australia, while the percentage of Indigenous students who successfully complete their NTCE is very small. Increasing numbers of students are opting to undertake Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, with some of them choosing to integrate these with their NTCE.

Literacy and numeracy achievements

National testing

33.   Since 2000, the Australian states and territories have been conducting annual literacy and numeracy tests for primary school students in Year 3 and Year 5, to provide nationally comparable data in relation to learning outcomes in these areas. In the Northern Territory these tests are conducted as part of the Multi-level Assessment Program (MAP). The percentage of NT students who achieve the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks is lower than any other state or territory and consequently is below the national average (Table 3).

Table 3   Proportion of Year 5 students who achieved the reading benchmark, 2000 (per cent)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Average age (yrs)[a]	10.8	10.9	10.3	10.2	10.5	11.0	10.7	10.7
Years of schooling[b]	5.6	5.6	4.7	4.6	5.3	5.7	5.5	5.3
Percentage achieving benchmark	89.1	92.1	78.5	93.6	84.4	81.4	94.0	71.2

[a] The typical average age of students at the time of testing.
[b] The typical average time that students had spent in schooling at the time of testing.
Source: SCRCSSP, 2003.

34.   The 2002 MAP test results show that primary school students residing in urban and regional areas of the Northern Territory are more likely to achieve benchmarks in reading and numeracy than are remote students (Table 4).

Table 4   Northern Territory Multilevel Assessment Program – Achievement Rates, 2000 – 2002
Percentages of Year 5 students reaching benchmark

URBAN	Government			Non Government		
	2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**
Year 5 Reading	80.7	84.0	88.8	90.4	92.6	96.1
Year 5 Numeracy	83.3	81.0	86.7	93.3	84.5	94.5

REGIONAL	Government			Non Government		
	2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**
Year 5 Reading	79.3	75.3	85.9	83.1	90.9	93.2
Year 5 Numeracy	81.3	74.6	81.6	86.0	82.9	91.7

REMOTE	Government			Non Government		
	2000	**2001**	**2002**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**
Year 5 Reading	18.7	21.2	30.1	2.6	6.3	6.0
Year 5 Numeracy	20.5	20.3	26.7	7.0	7.1	2.3

Source: Business Information Services, DEET, 2003.

35.   The overall consequence of the Territory's MAP results is that many young people entering high school do not possess the levels of literacy and numeracy required to cope successfully with the normal high school curriculum. This is a major concern for both primary school and a secondary schools, and there should be close collaboration to address this issue. This need for closer collaboration between primary and secondary schools is a recurring theme in our report and underpins some of our major recommendations.

International Comparisons

36.   The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a survey of 15 year old students in three areas of literacy: reading, mathematical and scientific. Because the assessment program involves students from a range of countries, all with different curricula, the focus of assessment is on how well prepared students are for life beyond school on various intellectual abilities. PISA measures the percentage of students who achieved at or above the score for the 27 OECD countries who participate. Results from 2002 indicate that Australian students performed at a high level relative to most other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The results for the Territory were lower in all three areas compared with other states or territories (Table 5).

Table 5   Literacies of 15 year olds – percentage of students who achieved at or above the OECD mean in 2002

State/Territory	Reading	Mathematical	Scientific
NSW	67	69	64
VIC	55	61	57
Qld	60	64	61
WA	63	70	67
SA	65	61	65
TAS	60	69	56
ACT	71	69	72
NT	50	54	50
Aust	62	65	62

Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE)

Completion rates

37.   The NTCE is awarded to students who successfully complete the requirements of their senior secondary education. In 2002, a total of 819 students received their NTCE (Table 6). This represents 80% of the possible completing students, a figure which has been consistent over the last eight years. Of the Year 12 students who received their certificates in 2002, 484 (59%) were female and 335 (41%) were male. This mirrors the national trend of more females successfully completing secondary education than males.

Table 6   Students enrolled in Year 12 compared to NTCEs issued, 1995-2002

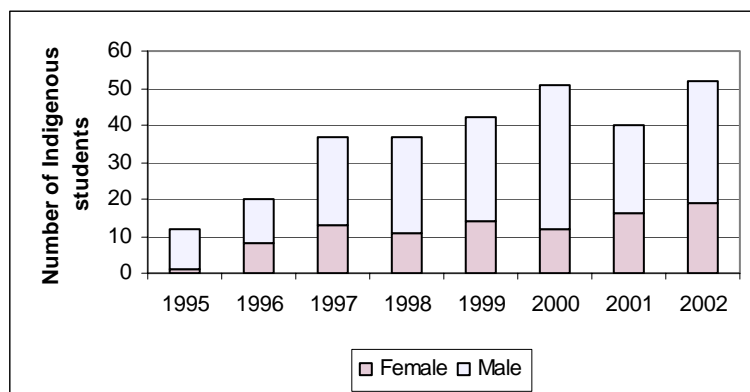| Year	Total Year 12 Students*	Completing NTCE requirements Students**	Year 12 Female*	Year 12 Male*	NTCE Issued	NTCE Female	NTCE Male
2002	1 511	1 018	826	685	819	484	335
2001	1 516	1 042	841	675	824	489	335
2000	1 377	922	781	596	789	481	308
1999	1 529	940	826	703	778	464	314
1998	1 385	878	753	632	712	403	309
1997	1 361	792	736	625	682	427	255
1996	1 311	830	642	669	702	385	317
1995	1 291	818	659	532	710	380	330

*The data for this table are based on August age-grade census figures provided by DEET Business Planning and Information Division.

** Previously these students were referred to as being enrolled in ten or more Stage 2 units. Currently they are defined as being enrolled in six Stage 2 units with a total enrolment of 22 units.

38.   In 2002 only 52 (six per cent) Indigenous students received an NTCE (Figure 3). This is a slight increase on 2001 when 40 (five per cent) attained their certificate . While the numbers are increasing, they are still extremely low given that Indigenous students make

up approximately 32% of the total secondary student population. This is a major issue in Territory secondary education, which will require long term strategies to overcome underlying causes, as well as highly focused efforts in the short term, if these proportions are to be brought anywhere near close to those for the Territory as a whole.
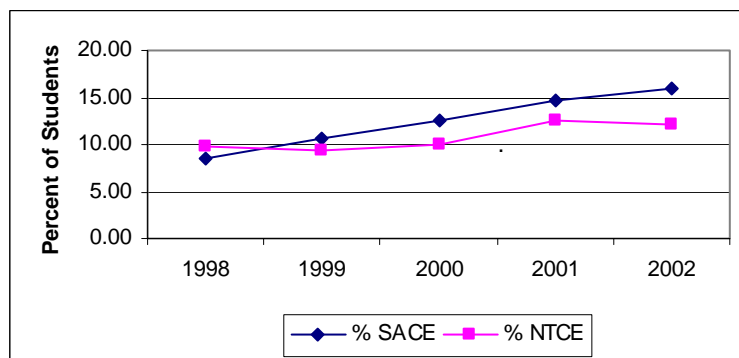
Figure 3   Number of Indigenous NTCE recipients, 1995-2002

Tertiary Entrance Rank – comparisons with South Australia

39.   The Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER)[4] is the primary mechanism through which universities select students for entry into higher education programs. Increasingly, however, young people not intending to take a higher education pathway are opting for the flexibility available in the NTCE completion rules, and choosing a pattern of subjects that allow them to attain their certificate without having to achieve a TER. In the Territory the proportion of NTCE recipients *not* receiving a TER in 2002 was 12%. While this proportion has risen slightly in the last five years, it is not as great an increase as in South Australia where 16% of SACE recipients did not receive a TER in 2002. Figure 4 shows the upward trend in percentages of students not taking out a TER. One of the possible reasons for these increases could be the growth in VET and other learning pathways for students.

Figure 4   Proportion of NTCE recipients not receiving a TER, 1998-2002

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[4] The South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) calculates a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) for students who have completed the required number and type of subjects
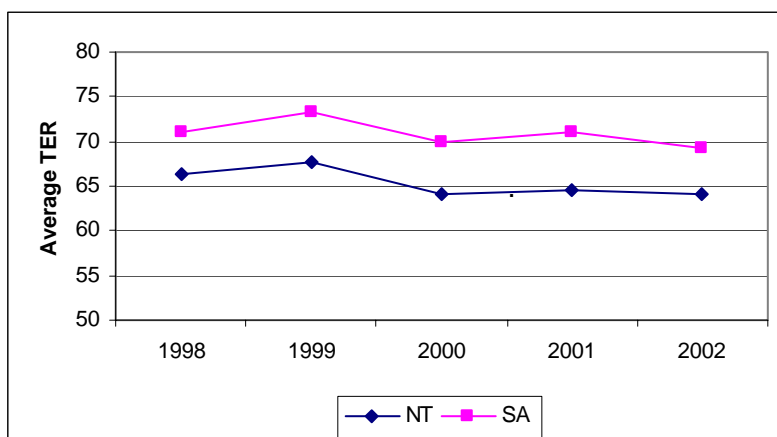
40.   As students in the Northern Territory complete the same subjects and examinations as those in South Australia, direct comparisons between student performances in the two jurisdictions are inevitable. However, the Northern Territory and South Australia present very different educational contexts, and so the following comparisons should be treated with caution.

41.   A comparison of average achievement scores for South Australian and Northern Territory students across the range of subjects reveals that, on average, those in South Australia perform better than those in the Northern Territory. The average difference between SA and NT average achievement scores in the Higher Education Selection Subjects (HESS) General subjects in 2002 was one point on a 20 point scale, or five per cent lower. These are usually the most challenging subjects that are chosen by students who wish to gain university entrance.

42.   The difference between SA and NT average achievement scores in HESS Restricted subjects is 1.5 points, or 7.5% lower. These are the subjects generally taken by students in the middle part of the senior secondary cohort. Both SA and NT students perform better in the HESS General subjects than the HESS Restricted subjects (Figure 5).

Figure 5   Average achievement scores for HESS General and Restricted subjects, 2002

43.   Over the past five years the average TER score in South Australia has consistently been approximately five points or five per cent higher than the average TER score attained by students in Northern Territory schools (Figure 6). However the TER averages for the Territory's two largest high schools are equivalent to the South Australian average, and these two schools enrol more than 43% of the total Year 12 cohort in the NT.

Figure 6   Average TER for South Australia and the Northern Territory, 1998-2002

Source: SATAC

44.   Despite these results for average TER, Territory high achievers are very well represented in some high demand university courses. NT school leavers[5] make up about 0.5% of all school leavers enrolled at higher education institutions across Australia. Notwithstanding these small numbers, Territory young people are over-represented in some areas. For example, only 0.6% of the total number of school leavers in Australia are accepted into general medicine courses, yet the proportion from the NT enrolling was 1.1% in 2001 and 1.8% in 2002. The only cohort of students with greater representation in this field in 2002 was overseas students. In 2002, in the field of medical science 1.3% of all Australian school leavers went into these courses, yet the proportion of NT school leavers entering these programs was 2.1%, just behind the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) with 2.6% (DEST, 2002).

Tertiary Entrance Rank – comparisons between Northern Territory schools

45.   In the Territory, for the years 2000-2002, the mean TER shows considerable variation among schools, and some variation from year to year. In an analysis for all schools categorised by type (government / non government) and location (urban / regional) there appears to be little overall difference in average performance of schools.

46.   Even so, the TER averages for the two government schools with the largest cohorts of Year 11 and 12 are consistently higher from year to year than those government schools with small cohorts at this level. This variance causes us to question what are the educational advantages of having small, and hence uneconomic Year 11 and 12 tops on schools teaching the middle years. If they are teaching non-TER directed courses, or specialise in a particular discipline area this is one thing; but if the prime aim remains the

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[5] School leavers as defined by DEST, and home location postcode to classify students by state or territory, 2002

TER, why would young people not go to a school environment more likely to enhance their chance of an improved TER result?

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

47.   Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an expanding part of secondary education in the Northern Territory, as it is nationally, and this trend is likely to continue. Urban young people can access Certificate I and II qualifications as part of VET in Schools programs and regional and remote students can access Certificate I and II as part of the Training for Remote Youth (TRY) program. VET can now be integrated into the NTCE. This move in a sense is an acknowledgement that the school curriculum on offer for the secondary cohort has been unsuitable for many, an issue we address in detail in this report.

48.   Since 1997 there has been a 400% increase in enrolments by Territory secondary students in VET (411 to 1 753), and a corresponding growth of 240% (191 254 to 456 414) in the number of hours of training actually completed[6]. The only outcomes data readily available are for module completion rates for the age group 15–19 years. This indicator suggests the NT has slightly fewer completions compared with national rates (Table 7), but for young people of secondary school age, the difference is negligible.

Table 7   Comparison of Module Completion Rates for 2002

Age Group	Module Completion Rate (per cent)	
	NT	National
15 – 19 years	71	73
All ages	73	80

Source: NCVER, unpublished statistics for 2002

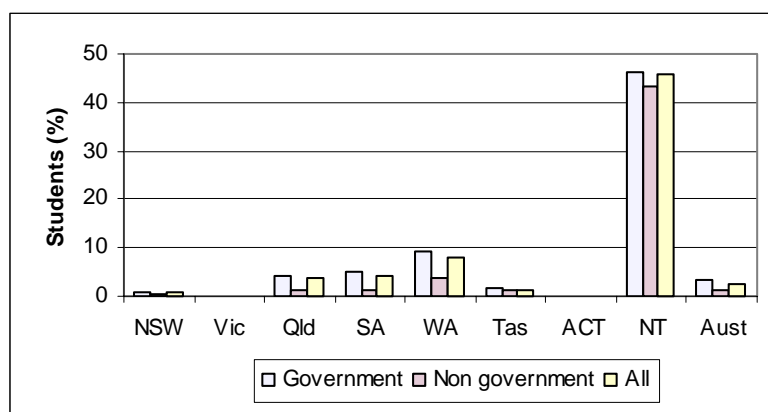**Secondary schools in the Northern Territory**

Kinds of schools

49.   In some Australian jurisdictions, secondary school includes Year 7, while others start at Year 8. The Northern Territory incorporates both models: in the Top End students move to high school at the end of Year 7, while in Central Australia Year 6 is the last year of primary school.

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[6] Annual Hours Curriculum (AHC)

50.　　Currently there are 25 secondary schools in the Territory, comprising 13 Government schools and 12 non-Government, with just over half being located in the urban areas. There are also young people of secondary age enrolled in Henbury School and Don Dale Education Unit in Darwin.

51.　　There is one secondary distance education school, the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC) that delivers education for Years 8–12. One of its responsibilities is to be the deliverer and registered provider of secondary education in most of the remote or very remote schools. Alice Springs School of the Air (ASSOA) delivers Year 7 distance education.

52.　　In the remote and very remote areas there is a variety of schools in which secondary aged students are enrolled. These include three Area Schools, 19 Community Education Centres (CECs), 47 Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs) and 21 schools that are known as 'small schools'. With the exception of Area Schools, these schools do not have the authority to deliver secondary education (although Kalkaringi and Maningrida CECs are trialling local provision with DEET approval). This implies that there is a significant number of young people of secondary school age not accessing what would be considered 'proper' secondary education.

53.　　The non-government sectors operate two Years 8-10 secondary schools, three comprehensive schools (Years 8-12) and one senior college (Years 11-12) in the Darwin urban area. Three of these provide boarding accommodation for students. Palmerston has one non-government Years 8-10 secondary school, as does Katherine. In Alice Springs there are two Years 7-12 non-government secondary schools, one of which provides boarding accommodation, and there is one school exclusively for Indigenous boarding students. There is also an Indigenous school in which secondary aged students are enrolled. In the remote or very remote areas, there are four non-government schools in which secondary aged students are enrolled, and there are two Indigenous boarding schools in these areas (DEET, 2002a).

54.　　In total, then, excluding NTOEC and ASSOA, there are 59 government schools and 18 non-government schools – including seven boarding schools – in which secondary aged students were enrolled in 2002 (DEETa, 2002).

55.　　As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a significant proportion of the Northern Territory population resides in either remote or very remote areas. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has a higher proportion of remote schools (primary and secondary) than any other state or territory (Figure 7), another issue of considerable relevance to this review.

Figure 7   Students attending schools in remote areas as a proportion of all students, 2001

Source: DEST, unpublished

Government / non-government market share

56.   Of all the states and territories the NT has the second lowest proportion of secondary
        aged students enrolled in non-government schools, at 29% (Table 8).

**Table 8   Proportion of full time equivalent student enrolments in non-government schools,
             August 2001**

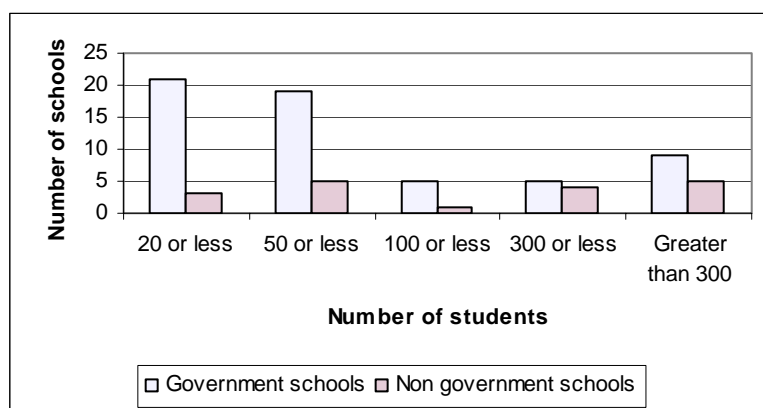|	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Secondary Schools Enrolments (%)	35.4	38.7	35.6	33.8	35.4	27.2	41.3	28.7	36.0

Source: ABS, 2002

Boarding schools

57.   There are approximately 800 secondary students enrolled as boarders in the NT, with
        about 80% being Indigenous secondary age students from remote locations. Over 95% of
        these students are enrolled in non-government boarding schools. Most of the schools use
        a traditional boarding school model, with the exception of Marrara Christian School in
        Darwin which operates a model where students live in suburban houses under the
        supervision of house parents. Woolaning School in Litchfield and Nyangatjatjara College
        in Central Australia are recently constructed boarding schools that are specifically for
        Indigenous students, and have been built closer to the communities or family connections
        of the young people. Both schools have altered their school year from the usual four
        10 week terms, to meet the needs of the students.

School size

58.   In the Northern Territory, 25% of secondary schools (government and non-government) have 300 or fewer students (Figure 8). Given the number of small communities in remote areas, this is not surprising. Nearly 80% of government schools have fewer than 100 secondary student enrolments and Maningrida Community Education Centre is the only remote school with more than 100 students (DEET, 2002a). Fifty per cent of non-government schools have secondary student enrolments below 100. Unlike government schools, only 50% of these schools are in remote areas.

Figure 8   Size of government and non-government secondary schools in the Northern Territory

Source: DEET, 2002.

Schools utilisation

59.   Table 9 shows the capacity of government and non-government secondary schools in regional and urban locations in the Northern Territory, and the numbers of students enrolled and attending in each of these as at August 2002. While some schools are close to capacity, there are many with enrolments significantly below the numbers the schools were built to accommodate. This will be a real advantage, not only to cope with possible increased enrolments, but also to allow for renovations of existing facilities to adjust to the proposed changes in pedagogy that underpin this review. We saw creative examples of this in some of our visits.

Table 9   Capacity*, enrolments** and attendance*** for Northern Territory secondary schools by location and school type (excluding remote schools), as at August 2002

Location	School Type	School	Capacity*	Enrolments**	Attendance*
Regional	Government	Alice Springs High	1000	446	392
		Anzac Hill High	500	269	251
		Centralian College	500	306	248
		Katherine High	800	531	486
		Nhulunbuy High	450	235	180
		Tennant Creek High	400	185	163
	Government Total		*3650*	*1972*	*1720*
	Non Government	OLSH - Alice Springs	1120	1047	926
		St Josephs	360	278	278
		St Phillips College	590	589	541
		Yipirinya	340	114	46
		Yirara College	220	223	171
	Non Government Total		*2630*	*2251*	*1962*
Regional Total			*6280*	*4223*	*3682*
Urban	Government	Casuarina Senior College	1250	981	811
		Darwin High	1250	1169	1080
		Dripstone High	825	582	498
		Nightcliff High	830	338	287
		Palmerston High	750	691	649
		Sanderson High	1000	647	589
		Taminmin High	850	465	387
	Government Total		*6755*	*4873*	*4301*
	Area	Batchelor Area School	300	177	149
		Jabiru Area School	560	232	170
	Area Total		*860*	*409*	*319*
	City	Ludmilla Pre/Primary	410	153	108
	City Total		*410*	*153*	*108*
	Non Government	Essington	410	390	346
		Kormilda College	900	768	710
		Marrara Christian	470	308	276
		NT Christian College	150	127	113
		O'Loughlin College	450	395	335
		Palmerston Christian	250	185	171
		St Johns College	770	422	380
	Non Government Total		*3400*	*2595*	*2331*
Urban Total			*11425*	*8030*	*7059*
NTOCE	OLC	NT Open Education Centre	0	1038	na
NTOCE Total	*Represents student enrolments*		*0*	*1038*	na
Grand Total			*17705*	*13291*	*10741*

*Capacity is the number of students that the school has been built for.

**Enrolments are the number of enrolled in schools as at the August census date.

***Attendance is the number of students attending in schools as at the August census date.

(NTOEC total represents student enrolments, not full time students).

Staffing allocations in secondary schools

60.   According to the NT DEET Annual Report for 2001-02, there were 3 900 staff
       employed in schools across the Territory, of whom approximately 2 500 were teachers
       and approximately 1 400 were support staff. At the end of 2002, there were almost 1 000
       teachers in secondary schools and over 500 staff in non-teaching positions in secondary
       schools (Table 10).

Table 10   Number of DEET employees in secondary schools as at December 2002

Location	Number of staff	
	Teachers	Non teaching
Urban	504	190
Regional	171	79
Remote	301	290
TOTAL	**976**	**559**

Teachers

61.   Of the teaching staff in Northern Territory schools in 2002, 66% were classified as
       teachers, and 20% as executive teachers[7]. Ten per cent were classified as assistant
       teachers, and four per cent of the total were principals on executive contracts.

Allocation of staff

62.   The number of teaching staff and the ratio of positions at higher or executive levels
       are determined according to a staffing formula based primarily on enrolments. There are
       some adjustments made to assist the small comprehensive high schools with senior
       secondary enrolments.

63.   Each designated secondary school is provided with support staff using a complex
       formula based on enrolments. Area Schools and CECs are provided with non-teaching
       support staff according to a different formula, but there is no formula for the allocation of
       such staff to 'group schools'[8]. Principals of secondary schools have some flexibility in
       allocating these positions, and a number of schools have converted administrative
       positions to create a position to manage information technology (IT). Some schools

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[7] Executive teachers include senior teachers and assistant principals.

[8] Groups Schools are a single school entity with a number of different campuses. They were established to provide
small schools with leadership and support. Each 'campus' retains its local name. The on-site Principals are
supervised by and directly accountable to the relevant Group School Principal. There are five Group Schools: Top
End, Katherine, Barkly, Alice Springs East and Alice Springs West.

allocate administrative officers to perform specific operational tasks, for example library and science technicians and special education aides, where schools have special education units.

Student teacher ratio

64.   In 2002, the Australian student to teacher ratio for secondary schooling was 12.5 students to each teacher. The Northern Territory compares favourably with a student to teacher ratio of 11.4 and has a lower ratio than all other states and territories (see Table 11). However, the students-to teacher ratio presents the number of students per person classified as a teacher. A low ratio means there are a small number of students per teacher. The ratio is not a measure of class size and needs to be interpreted with care because it can be affected a number of factors—the proportion of small schools, the degree to which administrative work is undertaken by people classified as teachers and other inputs to school education (Rolfe, 2003).

Table 11 Students to staff ratio, 2001 (a)

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	Aust
Government Schools									
Teaching staff	12.5	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.2	13.4	12.1	11.4	12.5
Non-Government Schools									
Teaching Staff	12.3	12.2	12.8	12.5	12.5	12.4	13.1	11.2	12.4

1.   Full time equivalent students and full time equivalent staff.
    2.   Teaching staff have teaching duties (that is, they are engaged to impart the schools' curriculum) and spend the majority of their time in contact with students. Teaching staff includes principals, assistant principals and senior teachers.

Source: ABS 2002, Schools Australia 2001 in Report on Government Services, 2003

65.   Community Education Centres (CECs) and 'small schools' with an approved post-primary program[9] are allocated one teacher to 17 students, which is the same ratio as for the larger secondary schools. Area Schools are given a minimum allocation of four teachers, and when enrolments exceed 62 the usual secondary formula applies.

Specialist positions

Special education teachers

66.   Each secondary school is allocated a special education teacher to meet the needs of students with general disabilities on the basis of one teacher for every ten students. Most secondary schools have one special education teacher, regardless of their numbers, and there is currently a total of 20 employed. Students with severe or multiple disabilities are

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[9] The minimum enrolment required for an approved post-primary program is 24.

catered for in special units or schools where one teacher is allocated for every five students.

ESL teachers

67.   There are 60 ESL teaching positions available, allocated according to the number and levels of language support needs of ESL students and other relevant criteria. In 2002 some 97 requests were made for these 60 teaching positions and many schools were only entitled to a 0.5 teacher allocation. There are other ESL programs where extra resources are allocated for ESL support, with a particular focus on ESL for Indigenous language speakers in remote, regional and urban schools.

Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEP)

68.   Teachers who have a strong record of high quality teaching practice can apply for formal recognition through the Teacher of Exemplary Practice (TEP) program. Currently there are 73 TEPs in urban secondary schools, nine in regional secondary schools and one in a remote Community Education Centre.

Non-teaching staff

Home Liaison Officers (HLOs)

69.   Home Liaison Officers are attached to all secondary schools (excluding NTOEC, senior secondary colleges and Nhulunbuy High School) and also service primary schools in the relevant feeder area. Their role is to deal with issues of truancy by liaising between the school, students and the parents about attendance. Remote schools with more than 150 students are also entitled to a HLO. Currently there are 14 in remote areas.

Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs)

70.   Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) funding from the Commonwealth has allowed for the appointment of Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs). There are 44 AIEWs in total, of whom 13 are located in urban and regional high schools. There are no AIEWs in remote schools.

School-based Nurses and School Based Police Officers

71.   The Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) funds 14 school nurse positions in the Territory. All of these positions are in the urban and regional centres. The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES) funds 20 school based police officer positions for government and non-government schools throughout the Territory. While a number of these positions service remote areas, the personnel are based in an urban or regional centre.

Aboriginal Resource Officers (AROs) and Inclusion Support Assistants (ISAs)

72.   Schools also receive Commonwealth funds for targeted programs that include students with disabilities, Indigenous support, and literacy and numeracy. Schools, depending on their funding, employ a range of support staff on temporary contracts through School Councils. This type of employment covers AROs and ISAs. From our visits, we noted that these positions are critically important to the success of some learners. Also, at consultations and in written submissions strong concern was expressed that this type of employment did not allow for training or professional development and provides a lack of continuity of employment for individuals leading to high turnover and the constant need to re-train new employees. These issues are an important part of this report, and are addressed in Chapter 9.

Career Advisers

73.   There are career adviser positions in all secondary schools in urban and regional areas, but there is no provision for careers counselling in remote schools other than through NTOEC.

Profile of teachers in NT secondary schools

74.   According to the DEET Annual Report for 2001-02, 25% of teachers in NT government schools are male, and 75% are female. Over 56% of teachers were in the 41 – 65 year old age bracket, indicating a large recruitment challenge ahead, a matter also taken up in Chapter 9.

75.   In 2002, there were 48 Indigenous persons in teaching positions in government secondary schools with an additional 45 individuals employed in secondary schools in non-teaching positions. The majority were in regional and remote schools (Table 12). The proportion of Indigenous teachers (5%) is in marked contrast to the proportion of the Territory population that is Indigenous (29%) and the representation by Indigenous young people in the secondary school population (32%). The non-government sector currently employs a larger number of Indigenous teachers and support staff. The Catholic Education Office employs 150 staff in 133 in urban schools and 17 in Indigenous schools.

Table 12   Number of Indigenous employees in government secondary schools in 2002

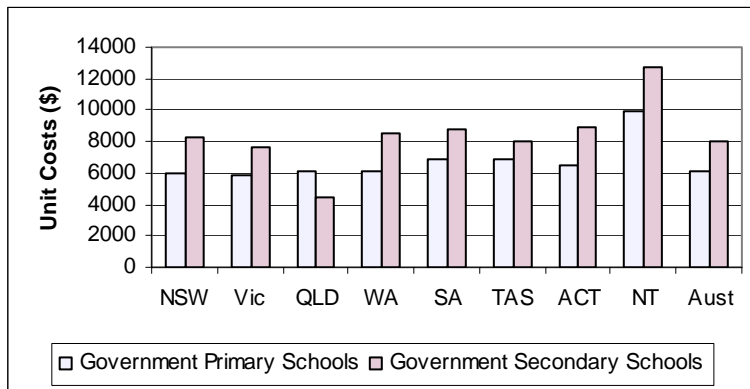|	Teachers	Non teaching
Urban	3	17
Regional	6	18
Remote	39	10
TOTAL	**48**	**45**

Teacher recruitment and retention data

76.   Of the 221 primary and secondary teacher commencements in 2003, 41% were allocated to remote schools. Fifteen per cent of the teachers commencing in remote schools were under 30 years of age.

77.   Overall, 20% of teachers commencing in 2003 were under 30 years of age and 60% of these new recruits came from interstate.

78.   The average length of stay in a secondary school in the urban areas is 4.6 years, compared to 4.06 years in regional schools and 2.7 years in remote schools (DEET, 2003).

Funding and Costs

79.   Given the dispersed nature and diversity of the Territory population as described earlier, the large numbers of students with special needs and the difficulties in delivering education to many small communities in remote areas, it is reasonable to expect that the cost of delivering education in the Territory will be higher than elsewhere in Australia. This is the case, as Figure 9 shows. In 2001 total *per capita* government spending in the NT for all schools was greater than for any other jurisdiction. Whether the Territory is receiving 'value for money', or in effect quality, remains an on-going question, which we address in Chapter 12.

Figure 9   Total government expenditure per full time equivalent student for primary and secondary schools, 2001

80.   Currently in 2002-03, the average spending per full time equivalent secondary school student is $13 057, and some of the program costs contributing to this are shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13   Summary of some key expenditure on secondary education
in the Northern Territory, 2002-2003

Item	2002 – 2003 Expenditure
ESL	5 215 339
Special needs	8 949 183
Two way learning	487 711
Accelerated Literacy	522 564
IT Services	12 378 583
Professional Development	3 438 797

81.   The NT and Commonwealth governments allocate considerable additional resources to support young people's learning in secondary programs. For a range of reasons – historical, staffing formula, insufficient funding – these resources have not always been distributed in an equitable manner. Some students, particularly in remote areas, do not have access to resources that students enjoy in urban and regional centres and even within these areas there is some inequality of access and opportunity.

82.   The challenge for DEET is to make the best use of all available resources, including those from the whole of government and other sectors to improve learning for all students in the Territory. This issue is taken up in Chapters 6 and 7 proposing the establishment of learning precincts. The aspiration of the Territory is that the educational outcomes are equal to or better than their southern counterparts. These issues are explored in some depth in the report, as the challenges presented by the nature of the secondary cohort and the strategies required of educators in the classroom are addressed. We are proposing a secondary system focusing on the Territory's young people, that will take into account issues raised by the statistical evidence we had before us, as well as the information gained from our visits to schools, meetings with stakeholders, parents, and the young people themselves. The aim for us all – teachers, parents, DEET, the Government, and the wider community – must be to improve the quality of secondary education in the Territory over the decade ahead.

CHAPTER 3
TEACHING AND LEARNING

A sound program of learning using effective pedagogy based on mutual respect is sequential, continuous, challenging and rewarding, making learning an enjoyable and fulfilling experience for those involved.

Young people have a right to learn and teachers have a right to teach, uninterrupted by disruptive behaviours.

1. The review team believes it is the quality of teaching and learning that will make the essential difference to the educational achievements and future pathways of secondary young people across the Northern Territory. While the quality of teaching and learning in NT schools varies, the review saw evidence of a number of essential features of good pedagogy used by teachers and valued by students. Moreover, these features align with essential features identified in a number of other states and by schools that are considered at the forefront of educational reform. It is vital for these elements to be developed into a teaching and learning framework, which teachers can use to build a repertoire of pedagogies to meet the learning needs of young people.

2. It is equally important that professional learning communities are established where teachers have the opportunity to develop, share, trial and test these pedagogies. Additionally, there must be opportunities created to explore innovative teaching and learning models that extend beyond the boundaries of current practice, particularly those identified by the review as being of fundamental importance to improving the quality of education. All young people should accumulate a learning profile that records their progress as a learner throughout their schooling years.

3. Pedagogy is the art and science of teaching and learning, and good pedagogy focuses on students: their interests and abilities, their past learning experiences and their future learning needs. Pedagogy describes all that happens between the participants in a learning situation. It is affected by the
   - characteristics of the learner or learners
   - teacher or teachers (their knowledge, skills and attitudes)
   - nature of the materials to be learned (the curriculum)
   - learning processes and activities used by the teacher
   - nature of the learning environment.

4. Perhaps Luke (1999) summed it up best when he stated
   Our main game is and always should be pedagogy – teaching and learning…This is teachers' work. … This is where student 'outcomes' – whether we define them in terms of skills, knowledges, attitudes, social practices, behaviours, ideologies, and identities – get shaped.

Any attempt to improve the quality of education must always begin with improvements to pedagogy. As one submission noted

> *instead of focusing on all the peripheral programs, which do not achieve outcomes of any merit, funding and energy should be directed towards pedagogy.*

Why pedagogy (teaching and learning) is important

5.   Good teaching that enables effective student learning is critical to a quality secondary education. Young people frequently told the review that it was the quality of teaching that was most important to them. They were not concerned about the gender or age of the teacher; they just wanted *good teachers*. There was strong evidence from the submissions and consultations that it is teachers and their pedagogies that make the difference. A principal of a regional school stated *the key to good secondary education is good teaching – teaching that is student-centred, that empowers students.* A large body of Australian and international educational research supports the view that the most important factor in engagement and participation in the curriculum and learning growth is the quality of teaching and learning (Hill *et al.* 1996; Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Rowe 2000, 2002; Scheerans *et al.*, 1993; Tymss, 1993).

6.   The review team did see and hear of excellent teaching practice in secondary classrooms. However, evidence from consultations and submissions revealed that the quality of teaching was variable and in some cases in remote areas difficult to recognise as secondary education. It should be noted this problem is not peculiar to the Northern Territory. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Project (Lingard *et al.*, 2001), the most extensive study of classroom practices completed in Australia, found that overall levels of student performance and the levels of productive classroom practices were not high in their state, particularly in secondary schools in lower socio-economic areas and in those with higher percentages of Indigenous students. The Queensland research found that to improve student outcomes teachers had to adopt more productive pedagogies that focus on high intellectual quality and are connected to their learning and life experiences. It also acknowledged that young people require a supportive classroom environment where differences are identified, valued and accounted for, if they are to achieve the high quality learning that is required of them (Lingard *et al.,* 2001).

7.   The review team was reassured to hear Territory students express similar views about pedagogy, indicating they are able to recognise good teaching and learning, and more importantly, they have experienced it. Most students said the best teachers were those who offer challenging classroom activities where *teachers have high expectations and work is more rigorous*. Many students told the review they like teachers who *relate subjects to real life*, especially the world of work. Young people also value teachers who respect them, are fair and allow them to make decisions about their learning. A number of

educators and parents supported these views but also identified another essential feature of good pedagogy: the importance of student-centred learning and the ability of teachers to cater for individuals. One submission encapsulated these beliefs with the statement

Teaching needs to be interesting, integrated, negotiated, innovative, challenging, and most of all planned to cater for the individual, not the whole class or a selected level in the class. It needs to develop more curious minds, with teachers and ICT as the facilitators in finding answers.

Student-centred teaching and learning

8.　　　A recurring theme in submissions and consultations was that many teachers in secondary schools focus on the delivery of curriculum content rather than on the abilities, interests and prior learning of their students. As one submission stated

We need to refocus secondary schools on teaching kids, not subjects. This requires a major change for secondary school teachers. There should be a greater focus on cooperative learning, learning styles and developing relationships.

The review team heard evidence that teachers in secondary schools must be able to identify and account for different learning styles, but that too often learning activities were designed around 'chalk and talk' or book exercises, emphasising passive, visual and verbal learning at the expense of 'hands on' or active approaches.

It was not uncommon to hear comments like

Chalk and talk has to go. We have entrenched, outdated and inefficient teaching methods in our secondary schools that do not cater for kids, their learning styles and their interests and abilities or potential.

9.　　　Similarly, there was evidence in the submissions and consultations that teachers should *implement a multiple intelligences approach to learning* that allows for the various ways learners can demonstrate their intellectual ability. Comments from consultations and submissions indicated that secondary teachers focus more on developing linguistic and mathematical intelligences with less recognition of visual, social and emotional intelligences. It was pleasing for the review team to be told that learning styles and multiple intelligences are a key component of the pre-service training of secondary teachers at Charles Darwin University (CDU), but there must be more professional development opportunities for current teachers in this area.

Relevance of learning

10.　　　Many young people commented that much of what they learn in school has little or no relevance to their lives and they have limited opportunities to negotiate their learning. They claimed it is difficult to connect the material with their current experiences or future career pathways, as one student pointed out: *We don't learn about relevant topics - it's*

not the stuff we're into. Schools should give us stuff for the real world. A number of submissions supported this view, one capturing the general feeling that a *lot of what is taught is outdated and not related to current life circumstance… learning only takes place if it is meaningful and can be transferred to the child's life.* When teachers negotiate with students to select resource materials and learning activities that relate to their experiences or the world of work, they demonstrate an interest in their learning and often produce high quality outcomes. Moreover, learning is more meaningful when connections are made between different subject areas and when knowledge and skills are developed in the context of solving a real-life issue or problem (Lingard *et al.*, 2001); not that all learning can always be seen to have immediate relevance, and sometimes teachers have to explain that this material must be known before something more related to their future can be attempted. It is critical that the 'why we are doing this' is clear both to the teacher and the student.

11.   The review team did see examples of teachers who had developed units of work that allow young people to connect their learning to personal experiences and to apply their knowledge to real-life situations, involving the development of an integrated curriculum approach where a problem, issue or question is explored. This was evident in a remote school where a teacher negotiated a unit on governance to meet learning outcomes in Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) and English. The students attended local council meetings where they mapped decision-making and governance procedures, recorded the minutes and followed up council decisions by writing letters to address issues raised. They then compared these structures, roles and responsibilities with other levels of government in Australia.

12.   At a regional high school teachers have developed what they describe as a MESS (Maths, English, Science and SOSE) Hall approach to learning, where young people in Year 10 are involved in negotiated real-life activities to meet learning outcomes across a number of subject areas. A member of the review team visited one of the classes and recorded

> *I went into a withdrawal class: about 15 boys around a table, which in some schools would have been a recipe for disaster. Not here: they were working on planning doing more concreting in the school forecourt. They showed me a video of the planning and making of the previous garden beds, which they described as 'hard work but good fun'. As I left the room I asked, 'What do you think of school?'. There was a pause as if they had not been recently asked the question, and words like 'good', 'great', and 'I like it' were offered, which were then echoed by others. I had no doubt that they did.*

13.   This is not to say that the rigour of the subject disciplines should be diluted. As a teacher acknowledged, *we need to maintain the integrity of the subject areas but use new delivery models.* An integrated, problem-based approach, such as the one described

above, is more likely to encourage students to be highly motivated and productive, allowing them to connect their learning to the world outside the classroom.

14.   The review team heard comments from parents, young people and teachers across a range of schools in the Territory about the need for *subjects to be related to real life* and the need for a realistic and holistic appraisal of *what education is for in remote communities*. In particular, young people spoke of wanting secondary school to be focused more on *learning to be part of the community* and providing greater *opportunities* and *support* for the transition to work, enterprise or other activities. They can achieve such learning through vocational and enterprise education which is part of the curriculum in Years 7 to 10 or through separate programs such as VET courses and School Based Apprenticeships which are generally offered in Years 11 and 12, although some younger students are doing these programs.

15.   Many secondary aged young people across the Territory are engaged in vocational education and training (VET) courses, either through their schools or through Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The pedagogical strengths of these VET courses lie in their relevance to learners' immediate and future needs. However, the pedagogical weaknesses lay in the assessment-driven nature of the courses and the lack of training in adult learning techniques and principles evidenced by teachers and trainers of those courses. Often, pedagogies appropriate to primary school years were used with 12 – 18 year old young people. Some were undertaking school based apprenticeships and many spoke highly of these.

16.   While 'enterprise' is a separate strand in one of the learning areas for students in Years 7 to 10, and vocational learning is a cross-curricula perspective in the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF), the review team saw little evidence of such programs in those middle years. The opportunities for such learning appear to have diminished due to a shortage of trained people in this area and the inability of some teachers to integrate vocational learning into their curriculum. Pedagogically, the review team sees great value in enhancing enterprise and vocational learning and activities and making them part of the mainstream curriculum in these years. Teaching and learning that embrace hands-on activities, that foster collaboration and teamwork within and beyond the school and provide real life experiences and success, are as critical as enabling individualised achievement in the academic discourses of subject disciplines, and may well enhance these.

17.   Young people often saw practical classes as attractive and relevant. Physical education and sport were perceived to offer opportunities to build self-esteem and burn

off energy. Many students also valued art, technology and design classes. One submission said

> *there needs to be a renewed focus on the creative areas of the curriculum with a lot more learning, making, creating and dabbling, through visual arts, crafts and technology.*

18.　　The review heard many times that young people enjoy and sometimes learn more from their experiences in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities than they do at school. Participation in part-time work, clubs, sporting teams, special award schemes, debating and public speaking, school productions, camps and end-of-semester excursions allow young people to develop essential learnings such as self-confidence, resilience, cooperation, teamwork, initiative, creative thinking and resourcefulness.

19.　　A number of schools organise a variety of camps or excursions for students as part of the school program, during which young people are expected to meet a range of learning outcomes both in their preparation for, and their participation in these activities. Both students and staff in these schools confirmed the value of these experiences in developing important intellectual, social and interpersonal skills; yet students often receive no formal recognition or credit for the skills and understandings they gain from these activities. This is an important issue that the review believes must be addressed and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

Intellectual Rigour

20.　　Research has shown that young people, particularly under-achievers, benefit from being offered learning activities that require them to be actively engaged in the construction of knowledge (Newmann & Associates, 1996; Lingard *et al.*, 2001). Young people told us they want to be challenged by their learning, claiming the best teachers are those who offer stimulating curriculum resources and intellectually demanding learning activities. They value teachers who explain their materials and tasks clearly, giving the opportunity to learn through a variety of thought-provoking activities involving 'hands on' approaches, group discussion, individual research and problem solving, as well as integrating the use of ICT into their pedagogy. It was impressive to hear young people recognise and value such good pedagogy.

21.　　Evidence did emerge, however, that some teachers have low expectations of young people and 'water down' the curriculum and learning processes to keep them entertained and happy. Students in such situations told us they are often asked to copy work from the board, fill in worksheets and complete simple textbook exercises. While a lack of intellectual rigour in teaching and learning activities was particularly evident in some remote schools, it was not confined to these places.

22.   Some teachers in remote schools seem overwhelmed by, and pedagogically unable to cope with, the low levels of literacy and numeracy skills among their students. This is compounded by the many social problems confronting their students and the consequent effects on attendance and their ability to learn. A teacher commented, *align all these problems and it all gets too hard.*

23.   All too often these factors influence teacher expectations of Indigenous students, and we saw evidence of learning activities that required very little intellectual engagement, where a significant number of Indigenous students complained the work was *boring*, because *it's too easy*. Concerns were also regularly raised by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents and students about the lack of intellectual rigour in some distance learning materials.

24.   When teachers had high expectations of students and constructed activities that engaged them in higher order thinking on challenging topics, high quality teaching and learning became evident. A principal of a remote school told the review

> *In the past, teachers' expectations of these kids have been too low. We are trying to break down the mind-set that these kids are not able to do challenging work… We extend them. We aren't concerned if they can't do basic arithmetic; we give them calculators and start teaching them algebra and geometry.*

The executive teacher in that school, supported this approach, stating

> *The first step towards establishing secondary education in remote communities is to encourage kids to become students. The culture of the school has to change. Teachers must have high expectations when it comes to attendance and work standards. Teachers must recognise although these students cannot read and write very well, they are not dumb and can't be babied.*

25.   We witnessed Indigenous students at a remote school learning difficult mathematical concepts and using 'critical literacy' approaches in English that go well beyond the demands of basic reading and writing. They were enjoying their learning and relishing the challenges set for them. One Indigenous student told the review

> *It's good because we learn more. We are doing Pythagoras, algebra and ratios. We didn't like secondary school before when we had easy work.*

Another commented

> *I don't like teachers who give too many clues. I like to work things out for myself.*

The review team believes that if the Territory is to prepare students adequately for a global knowledge-based economy, teachers must be able to develop higher order thinking, deep knowledge and understanding, as well as critical questioning and reflection in learners.

Mutual Respect

26.   Mutual respect is a key feature of successful relationships between students and teachers, and there was evidence from both consultations and submissions that such relationships exist to varying degrees in all NT schools. At one school we visited it was obvious that interpersonal relationships are of the utmost priority. They had a strong pastoral care program, more time with fewer teachers and longer periods in class to provide greater opportunities for teachers and young people to develop positive relationships.

27.   Both more accomplished students and others who were at risk of not completing their schooling commented on the positive relationships between students and staff at a senior college. They appreciated the college environment, where *staff treat students as young adults who are capable of making mature decisions*. On the other hand, the review heard a number of young people from schools across the Territory comment about the lack of respect shown to them by individual teachers and administrators. These students made comments about teachers they believed did not treat them fairly, made racist comments and gave little opportunity for choice or decision making in their learning. They were treated, as they said, *like little kids.*

28.   Mutual respect was also a key issue for many teachers in our discussions. Many believe they have insufficient skills or support to deal with the growing number of extreme behavioural problems in some NT secondary schools. Teachers, young people and parents told the review they would like a teaching and learning environment that is free from disruptive, and on occasions, violent behaviour. In addition, teachers and school administrators spoke of parents and students who are more concerned with their *rights rather than fulfilling their responsibilities*, whereas parents and students were concerned that discipline processes are not always *fair and transparent*.

29.   Where schools had well-developed behaviour management policies with clear expectations, as well as detailed discipline procedures and consequences for inappropriate behaviour, teachers were less likely to see behaviour management as an issue. In one such school a teacher said, *students feel the rules are clear and if they muck up they sign an agreement card about what they will do to change behaviour*. But there were some schools where teachers complained of a lack of consistency in expectations and discipline. One teacher described the problem as *I am not teaching any more, I manage behaviour –[I] would like to have more structure…boundaries …clearer consequences.* A number of schools have adopted restorative justice models for student discipline, involving counselling, case conferences and mediation with young people and their families, and reported success with these approaches. The Australian Education Union (AEU NT) submission noted

There is deep concern at the level of violence, and other unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour in our schools. This behaviour in schools must be addressed effectively in order to maintain the highest professional standards of service. Expectations for appropriate behaviour in a productive and supportive environment depend largely on cooperation and understanding among teachers, support staff, parents and other community representatives as active participants in the learning process. The inclusion of the MindMatters program (a resource and professional development program to support Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the social and emotional well-being of members of school communities) has assisted a number of schools in addressing the behaviour management needs of students.

We support this statement and particularly the effectiveness of the MindMatters program in assisting schools and teachers in this regard.

30.   The review team was presented with, and saw first-hand, evidence of the increasing number and complexity of social and emotional problems faced by teachers in urban, regional and remote communities, including substance abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, physical violence, property damage and self-harm. The range of support services varied greatly between schools and these were often not well coordinated with services in the wider community, so teachers were often expected or obliged to assume welfare and parenting roles for which they may have no experience or formal training. Perhaps the most common catchphrase was that *teachers should be able to get on with the job they were trained to do, teach.* There was general acknowledgment in submissions and consultations of the valuable role other professionals and para-professionals play in assisting with behaviour management and student welfare.

31.   Student-centred, dynamic and purposeful pedagogies, where teachers offer intellectually rigorous work that is relevant to student experience, and where both enjoy relationships based on mutual respect, in a supportive school culture with appropriate frameworks and access to support, are all vital factors in dealing with behaviour management issues and improving student learning outcomes.

Essential qualities of learners

32.   The EsseNTial Learnings that underpin the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (DEET, 2002) used for students from Transition to Year 10, and the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) qualities (Dellit, 2003) and Essential Learnings that underpin the South Australian Curriculum Statements (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2003) for Years 11 and 12 have identified some common characteristics, capacities and skills students must acquire if they are to leave their years of formal education equipped with skills for lifelong learning. There are obvious connections between these frameworks and we summarise them as follows.

Young people need to become

- self-directed, reflective thinkers who have learnt how to learn
- creative and resourceful innovators who enjoy challenge, explore ideas and persevere with them
- thoughtful producers who apply logical, critical and innovative thinking to their lives
- effective communicators, with sound literacy, numeracy and information technology skills
- resilient, with a strong sense of identity and well-being
- collaborative group members with a sense of community and social responsibility.

33.   Today's young people require generic skills about learning rather than bodies of knowledge. They want opportunities to work creatively, collaboratively and productively in a learning environment that strengthens their sense of identity and resilience. They need to take a more active role in the design of the learning process – in decisions about what and how they will learn and who will teach them. Teachers, therefore, have to facilitate and manage learning processes rather than dominate them, and develop partnerships with other teachers, professionals and para-professionals to assist young people to develop lifelong learning skills in order to respond to the diverse challenges posed by a knowledge-based, rapidly changing world. Schools have to offer teachers and other staff extensive support and professional development to fulfil these new roles.

A framework for teaching and learning

34.   Given the diversity of teaching and learning styles it is unrealistic and inappropriate to mandate one set of pedagogical approaches and ignore others. What is needed is a framework for teaching and learning that describes the essential features of good pedagogy, from which teachers can build a repertoire of dynamic and productive strategies to suit a range of students, learning outcomes and contexts. Over the last twenty years there has been much debate about pedagogy for Indigenous students based on research into Indigenous learning styles. In recent years there is some consensus that while Indigenous students need more explicit scaffolding for literacy learning, they prefer to learn by doing activities rather than talking about them, and so interaction processes in classrooms should be sensitive to the ways different cultures use language and gesture for communication. These principles are equally important for many non-Indigenous students too and must be taken into account in the development of any framework for teaching and learning. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 8.

35.   In addition, there are some models for pedagogy used in schools and systems interstate that reflect principles of high quality teaching and learning. For example, at the

Australian Science and Maths School (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2000) for years 10 to 12, the basis of pedagogy is mutual respect and the staff must be committed to the pedagogy, otherwise the approach will not work. They have established four key teaching and learning principles that underpin the curriculum. These are

- deep understanding: students are guided in active inquiry to develop deep and critical understandings
- transferable knowledge: learning is connected and applied to authentic problems
- learning together: collaborative learning
- how we think and learn: students will develop individual learning plans.

Students do inquiry-based projects using problem-solving approaches, they have the opportunity to plan their own learning program, and they have some choice of teachers who act as guides or mentors rather than the repositories of all knowledge.

36.   In Queensland, the New Basics Framework, (Education Queensland, 2002) reflects the dynamic relationship between pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. The integration of productive pedagogies, the new basics curriculum and rich tasks for assessments is a sound example of the systemic alignment of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. The Queensland Productive Pedagogies Framework outlines 20 essential features of good pedagogy, grouped into four main categories

- intellectual quality: higher order thinking, deep knowledge and understanding, substantive classroom conversation, knowledge as problematic and an understanding of how written and spoken texts work
- connectedness: knowledge is integrated, the curriculum is problem-based and connects to life experiences and the world outside the classroom
- supportive classroom environment: social support, student direction, academic engagement, self regulation, and explicit criteria for performance
- recognition of difference: cultural knowledge, inclusivity, group identity, and active citizenship.

37.   It came as no surprise that evidence from the submissions and consultations established four similar categories of good pedagogy in the Northern Territory. These are

- intellectual rigour: learning that challenges, motivates and extends
- relevance of learning: learning that is problem-based, integrated and connected to real-life experiences
- mutual respect: the basis for successful relationships between students and teachers
- student-centred learning: accounts for the diversity of student learning styles, abilities and interests and prior learning.

38.	The review believes that teachers in the Northern Territory require a framework that defines in more detail the essential features of good teaching and learning in each of the above categories. This framework should offer teachers a repertoire of strategies to use with the diverse range of students they encounter in their classrooms and other learning sites. DEET needs to coordinate the development of purposeful and dynamic teaching pedagogies to be implemented in NT schools. These pedagogies should be integrated with, and complementary to, the current NT Curriculum Framework and South Australian Curriculum Statements and Implementation Plans to allow for more challenging and relevant learning experiences, in an environment of mutual respect that accounts for the diversity of NT students' ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds as well as their learning needs and styles. The NT has developed its curriculum framework – it now should develop a pedagogical framework to match.

Students with special needs

39.	One of the most notable features of secondary education in the Northern Territory is the diversity of the student population, reflected in the range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, socio-economic circumstances, aspirations and opportunities, and abilities of young people. If education is to be of the highest quality for all, it is essential that schools and teachers are equipped to meet the special needs of all groups and individuals and that teachers adapt their pedagogies accordingly.

Special needs of boys and girls

40.	In past decades work was done to address issues in education that placed girls at some disadvantage; however, in more recent years considerable attention has been given to addressing the educational needs of boys. There is substantial evidence to support the contention that males are not achieving as well as females across a broad range of measures of educational attainment. This is supported by a recent NT report on Boys in Schools (2003) that shows boys are under-achieving on MAP literacy tests, their retention rates compare unfavourably with girls, and boys do not perform as well as girls in their Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) results. Moreover, boys are more likely to be referred to Student Services Branch of DEET for behaviour management and to be suspended from school (Education Advisory Council, 2003).

41.	While some teachers and parents are concerned about the *alienation of boys – nothing in the system catches their fanc*y, others are equally concerned for the education of girls. As one teacher said, *while we need to address boys' problems, let's not forget the girls, particularly Indigenous girls*. While in general girls perform better than boys in the NTCE, in 2002 only four per cent of the total numbers of NTCE recipients were Indigenous girls. Furthermore, many teachers and parents in remote communities spoke

about the number of young Indigenous girls who become pregnant and drop out of school. One Indigenous leader pointed out that *these girls feel shy because they are mothers; we need to bring these girls back to school.* Many Indigenous people who spoke to the review wanted schools to do more for these young women. It was suggested that sex education classes be offered to young Indigenous women in the later middle years and that support be provided to any young women who wish to return to school after having a baby.

42.   Young people in urban and regional schools interviewed by the review team were emphatic in their belief that the gender of the teachers was irrelevant; having a good teacher was more the determining issue. Nor were these students interested in single sex classes, with boys believing the girls *calmed them down* in classes, while girls thought classes would be *too boring without the boys.* On the other hand, young people did admit it would be good to have single sex classes for certain programs or activities. Some schools have established single sex classes but there is only anecdotal evidence that the practice has made any difference to student outcomes and behaviour. Teachers of these classes who spoke to the review team agreed that *single sex classes alone do not make for success*; effective teaching pedagogy was seen as more important. This view is supported by recent Australian research that confirms that the quality of teaching is the crucial factor in improving learning outcomes for both boys and girls (Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Martin, 2002; Rowe, 2000).

43.   In some remote communities it is considered essential to have single sex classes with teachers of the same gender, and some educational facilities have been designed accordingly. In other communities, boys and girls learn in the same classroom but students organise seating arrangements to account for both kinship and gender. It is also important in many communities that young men who have been initiated are treated as adults by their teachers and are educated in an area separate from the younger children and young women. Many respondents were concerned about the lack of positive male roles models in Indigenous communities – a view supported by the General Manager of DEET's Indigenous Education Division in her comments to the recent House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys. She said

> *We need to look in a holistic way at what happens to young men and boys in the community. There is a lack of role models for Indigenous boys – in their own homes, in the workplace and in service delivery areas.*
>
>   (House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys, 2002, p.34)

Schools need to have male role models for the young men and boys in remote communities. These may be teachers, assistant teachers, community council members or elders who should be actively involved in the education of young men and boys.

44.   Some schools have developed special programs to engage boys in education. Although there was anecdotal evidence to support these activities, in our view they need to be evaluated more rigorously using both qualitative and quantitative data. The notable exception is Boys' Business, an evolving research-based music program that encourages middle years boys to engage with education and the wider aspects of life generally. It involves the coordinator working with teachers and boys in schools across the Territory to develop strategies that engage boys and extend their learning. The program received a favourable evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and won acclaim at a national conference, demonstrating that the Territory can lead the nation in innovation if teachers are given the opportunities to share their expertise and explore new pedagogies using research-oriented reflective practice.

45.   While it can be misleading to generalise about boys and girls having different learning needs, it is acknowledged that boys often respond better to 'hands-on' approaches with varied but structured tasks and clear goals (Education Advisory Council, 2003; Lingard *et al.*, 2002; Martin, 2002; Rowe, 2000). A number of boys in the consultations confirmed this view, reflected by one boy's comment, *I need to apply knowledge to a physical situation so I can understand how it works*, but many girls interviewed indicated they too enjoyed 'hands on' approaches. It is important that teachers are able to identify the joint and separate needs of both boys and girls and to implement strategies to address these needs. As Lingard *et al* (2002, p.129) state, there is a need to move *beyond a narrow focus on educational strategies for boys to a broader focus on pedagogies and critical reflective practice*. The features that underpin dynamic and purposeful pedagogies outlined earlier in this chapter should cater for the educational needs of all students.

46.   It has also been acknowledged that a significant proportion of boys struggle with the general literacy demands of school and a number of teachers spoke of the *feminisation of curriculum and assessment procedures* where increasingly students are being asked to write extended passages which places them at some disadvantage (Rowe, 2002). This was confirmed by a number of teachers, and results from NT MAP tests indicate that many boys need extra assistance with literacy in upper primary and early secondary years and this must be a focus of teaching in all learning areas.

Literacy and numeracy practice for 'new times'

47.   In recent years, there have been numerous concerns raised nationally about the failing literacy and numeracy standards in our schools and the struggle teachers face in trying to implement better classroom practice to solve reading and writing problems. These concerns have also arisen alongside rapid and unprecedented economic, social and technological change and diminishing government investments in education. 'At risk'

and 'disengaged' are the terms being used most frequently to describe our young casualties of these changes, but the terms could just as readily be applied to some of our remote communities and their shifting and volatile economic base. In the NT these changes have perhaps had greater impact than other states and territories, but like them, how we address the challenge of one of the symptoms of this change, the literacy 'crisis' in our schools, has largely been confined to discussions and trials of teaching methods. While method is undoubtedly important, recent approaches to literacy teaching and learning emphasise the need for a critical pedagogical shift rather than merely the adoption of new strategies.

48.   Historically and popularly, literacy and numeracy are conceived as the skills of being able to read, write and comprehend meaning, and to use numbers through functions and concepts like counting, addition and multiplication, distance and weight. They are encoding and decoding skills that are the building blocks for doing other things. In schools and in the curriculum, these building blocks enable the students to progress to varying levels and degrees through the culture, relationships, content and expectations for written expression that define our schools, and that have been the nature of our schools for more than a century.

49.   Young people in the Territory perform well below other states in benchmark literacy and numeracy (L&N) tests, as has been noted in Chapter 2. Literacy and numeracy were raised consistently in submissions and consultations as a critical challenge for the Territory. We also noted that literacy and numeracy teaching and learning are a core part of early childhood and primary schooling, and while outside the terms of reference of this review, their impact on secondary education demands that we consider the effect of literacy and numeracy practices in primary school on secondary education.

50.   There are differences in benchmark outcomes for literacy and numeracy. Overall, Territory students in primary schools tend to perform better in numeracy than in literacy, when compared with other states and territories. As numeracy tends to become subsumed under the notion of literacy, the review team would highlight the need for research into numeracy learning and in particular, the application of explicit literacy strategies to develop improved understandings for teaching the language of mathematics.

51.   Comments about literacy and numeracy were most often tagged to other significant education issues, such as Indigenous education or educational transitions. Some secondary teachers considered that primary schools were not equipping their students with the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to function at secondary school. Many subject specialist secondary teachers did not feel that it was their job to teach literacy and numeracy. We saw little evidence of any concerted approach to literacy across the

curriculum in secondary schools, and heard that *most teachers in subject areas learnt English by 'osmosis' so therefore can't teach the literacy expected in their subject area.*

52.   In the majority of remote schools providing some form of schooling for secondary aged students, the level of literacy and numeracy was reported as being equivalent to Years 3 to 5. These estimates were consistent across Two Way Learning and English only schools. In the words of one remote school principal, *these kids can read, to a point, they just can't comprehend when it gets complex*. In the few remote schools where some very good secondary education was being implemented it was interesting to observe that students were not being consigned to building their literacy and numeracy skills from Year 3 on, but were being immediately engaged in 'higher level' work and enabled through a variety of means including technology (calculators) to dip backwards where necessary to accelerate specific skills for specific academic or vocational purposes.

53.   For 30% of the student cohort, English is a second or third language and exposure to any form of pre-literate or literate practices usually coincides with commencement of 'formal' schooling. This is apparent whether students are learning first in their own language, as in Two-Way schools, or in English only schools. The language and cultural reality of most communities is multilingual, complex and primarily oral, with an expanding repertoire of Aboriginal English being used by younger people. One teacher commented that

> there is an emerging generation of young people who cannot express themselves in either their first language or English beyond the level of a 12 year old.

54.   There are currently significant resources being directed into English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in NT schools. There has been a recent movement of ESL positions from urban to remote areas, ongoing effort in offering professional development in ESL strategies to staff across regions and an evaluation of outcomes where programs have been implemented. To date, it is not clear that the impact of these programs on learning has been significant. These programs and strategies are noted and we recognise that for many teachers, an understanding of the ESL contexts of young people is critical to engaging them with effective educational practice.

55.   The most recent report from the Northern Territory Accelerated Literacy Project (Gray *et al.*, 2003), delivered under contract by the Schools and Community Centre of the University of Canberra and being tried across a number of urban and remote schools in the NT, points to positive results particularly for those at the threshold of secondary learning. At one community school, the project reports that within four terms, students in a post-primary group initially assessed as poor or non-readers, are now working independently with age appropriate texts. As noted in the report, *this is, presumably, the*

first time in their lives that these students have ever experienced success at school (2003, p.43). What is important to note about this project is that while the 'method' is that of Scaffolding Literacy, its application requires a significant pedagogical shift in teaching and learning activities. In the words of the coordinator for the project, it is *critical literacy, inclusive pedagogy and reflective practice*. In the light of the outstanding early results of this project, the review team recommends support for the expansion of Accelerated Literacy to more schools.

56. The review team notes the commitment of this government to the implementation of the *Learning Lessons* report and commends the development of whole of school plans for literacy development. Aligning ESL resources with resources directed towards explicit literacy strategies such as the Accelerated Literacy program would further consolidate and focus developments and outcomes. Closer association between ESL learning and explicit literacy teaching strategies would pave the way for forward-looking professional development strategies at the cultural interface, enabling Indigenous education staff to unpack the *secret language* of the literate discourses of Western culture as well as non-Indigenous staff to develop fluency in working within the ESL contexts of communities and learners. It is also critical that ways of working together become a focus of teaching and learning in remote Territory schools.

57. Nonetheless, there are different models for learning literacy operating within schools in the NT and the review team welcomes DEET's decision to implement a study into evaluating their effectiveness. Evidence-based decision making that builds on the performance strengths of existing models is needed. In our remote regions an understanding of how such teaching and learning strategies can enable a 'cultural match' between the desired pedagogy and outcomes of education and Indigenous cultural practices is also critical. Clothing mainstream programs in various styles of 'cultural appropriateness' has too often led to ill-fitting expectations and acceptance of educationally bereft outcomes for educational endeavour (DCDSCA, 2003). This issue is discussed further in Chapter 8.

58. This review has also identified the importance of developing technacy[10] skills – critical skills for negotiating the varying and ever changing technologies increasingly integral to daily life, even on remote communities. Our social lives are becoming more and more *technologically textured* (Idhe, 1990, p.1), and this demands teaching and learning pedagogies that allow students to engage authentically with our technologically

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[10] Technacy: is the ability to understand, negotiate and manipulate technologies and their applications in the world around us. This includes but is not limited to digitised technologies. It underpins the ability to use a telephone, an ATM or diagnose the cause of a leaking tap. Being technate implies the ability to engage critically with the environmental, human and technical aspects of technologies and the uses to which they are put. Technacy skills are as basic and critical to living in the 21st century as literacy and numeracy skills (Seeman, 2000).

constructed worlds. Technacy skills are not an 'add on', although in a number of classroom environments teachers were struggling to do just this, that is, to fit the technologies into traditional classroom structures and practices. Where innovative models of teaching and learning were occurring these were being augmented by new models of technology use, and participants in these learning environments were not only developing technacy skills but also skills in how to transform information into knowledge. Significant research into how the development of technacy skills and their applications in the diverse contexts of the NT may augment and transform learning and the purposes of learning needs to be undertaken.

Students with disabilities

59.   The Northern Territory has a higher proportion of young people with disabilities than any other state or territory (see Chapter 2) so it is crucial that teachers and schools are adequately prepared to meet their special pedagogical needs. There was some evidence in the submissions and consultations that secondary teachers are not well informed about young people with disabilities and teachers find it difficult to meet their learning needs in mainstream classes. It was pointed out that

> *While teachers in primary schools have adapted to the demands of the Inclusion Policy, most secondary schools still have separate special education units which are only able to cater for students with the highest needs. We need to up-skill teachers about disability.*

The review team heard that the structures and organisation of secondary schools often make it difficult to operate an inclusion model and that teachers need support in adjusting their programs to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. There was also concern that information about students with disabilities and learning difficulties recorded at primary schools is not being given to, or used by high school teachers to inform their pedagogy, and students drop out of the support system when they go into high school and re-appear later as behaviour problems.

60.   On the other hand, the review heard from a number of parents with children in special education units who believe they are well catered for and there was unanimous support for the NT Secondary Transition Education Support—a school to work program to prepare students with disabilities for post school options. There was also support from educators for the Future Directions Program at a high school in Alice Springs and the Nomads Program at a suburban Darwin high school that are targeting students at risk of leaving school early because of poor attendance and consequent learning difficulties. However, there was a level of concern about the lack of special education programs for students in the senior years, as many schools do not offer special education support for these students. The review believes it is important for a range of special education programs, including both special units and inclusion support programs to be available for students in all stages of schooling. It is equally important there are sufficient teachers and Inclusion Support Assistants (ISAs) to support both models in any school or learning precinct.

61.   A number of secondary teachers advised of their belief that the support for students with disabilities is inadequate, with comments along the lines of

It's difficult to get support for students with special needs. There are too many hoops to go through to get special support; it's almost not worth the effort. It seems to be all a bit hard for Student Services with secondary students.

Others maintained there was a need for more resources, believing there is insufficient financial and systemic support in this area. It is the view of the review that the NT does well in this area when compared with other jurisdictions.

62.   Many organisations and individuals responding to the review offered hard evidence or made strong claims about the many and varied problems of teaching Indigenous young people with special needs, particularly in remote communities. An example is

Many of the students in remote communities have severe or multiple disabilities that require a level of intensive support that is not available locally.

At present, approximately 82% of Indigenous students have some degree of conductive hearing loss and 20% require other special education support. Given that a significant number of secondary Indigenous students are not currently enrolled in schools, there could be a considerable increase in the numbers requiring support, as secondary education is rolled out to more Indigenous communities. Many schools in remote areas do not have adequate facilities to address the needs of their students such as appropriate classroom acoustics for hearing-impaired students, wheelchair access and so on. There is a lack of suitably trained and culturally aware teaching staff and ISAs in remote areas to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

63.   One teacher summed up the issues, saying

We have a huge problem with students with special needs. Almost all Indigenous students have special needs. As teachers we often have to sacrifice the needs of the individual for the good of the group. I am not trained to teach students with such high levels of disability. It's difficult to get assessment and intervention, as the paperwork is onerous and difficult – you have to hound and chase every request right to the end. Once the intervention has been organised the student may leave the area or lose the hearing aid so it's very frustrating.

64.   The submission from DEET's Indigenous Education Division noted that

such long-standing and complex problems will never be solved by a single program. They require a whole of government and cross-department effort, accompanied by a commitment to turn the tide.

However, it is vital that all teachers and ISAs, particularly those in remote communities, are given adequate professional development and training to adapt their pedagogies to account for the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes. Rather than a range of one-off programs, this may require a collegial and ongoing approach to

professional development and training, where teachers and ISAs are given the opportunity to trial and share their pedagogies in a supportive environment.

65.   Several teachers in remote schools spoke positively of a recent trend where Curriculum Services Branch and Student Services personnel had visited the school together, offering them assistance with both intervention and programming strategies. The potential for a more coordinated approach to supporting students and teachers will be discussed in Chapter 11. Additionally, given the large numbers with special needs and the finite level of available resources, a pooling or clustering of resources, such as recommended in the Learning Precinct model in Chapter 6, could allow for a better range of programs, greater efficiencies and an improved service to both students and teachers.

Gifted and talented

66.   DEET first developed a policy on gifted children in 1986 and reviewed it in 1990 and 1994. The Northern Territory was amongst the first of the states or territories to establish a Senior Education Officer position to assist with the development of gifted education programs in schools and provide advice to parents and teachers. This position was abolished in 1999 with the restructure of the department. Members of the Northern Territory Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (NTAEGT) told the review

> *the educational needs of gifted and talented students have been neglected in recent years because there is no one at the system level championing or driving programs for these students.*

67.   Since 1999 the provision for gifted education has been left largely to schools with the support of Guidance Officers in Student Services who have assisted with the identification of such students. The review was told that currently secondary schools in the Northern Territory have no systematic method of identifying gifted and talented students. Historically, educators have relied on standardised intelligence tests in the identification of gifted students. However, expanded constructs of intelligence have led to a greater range of assessments being used in the identification of gifted students including achievement tests, checklists and talent portfolios as well as teacher nominations. Traditionally, minority and ethnic groups have been under-represented in gifted programs (Shaklee, 1997). Statistics suggest that a small percentage of any population is gifted, and a number of teachers in remote schools told the review they believe they have gifted and talented Indigenous students in their classes. The review believes there is a definite need for the development of a system-wide method of identifying gifted students, particularly Indigenous students and for the provision of support to teachers in implementing this system.

68.   There are some secondary school programs catering for gifted and talented students. Some schools have established separate classes for students of high potential, while others have a vertical timetable that provides opportunities for acceleration and specialist classes. More and more comprehensive schools allow Year 10 students to undertake Year 11 subjects; however, this acceleration is not always motivated by a desire to meet the pedagogical needs of gifted and talented students. A student at a regional school summed up the limitations of this approach

> *We'd love opportunities for acceleration. We can do Year 11 subjects in Year 10 but there's no real accelerated program. We need extension in all classes – more challenging learning because a lot of us are bored.*

Some students have undertaken enrichment programs at school or at CDU and a number of schools offer extra-curricular programs such as Tournament of the Minds. However, there is only anecdotal evidence to show that these programs lead to improvements in learning outcomes.

69.   Research (Reis, 2001; Renzulli, 2001) has shown that acceleration, enrichment and separate classes for gifted and talented students only have value if accompanied by a differentiated pedagogy and curriculum that challenge and extend their learning. A pedagogy that allows for differentiated models of learning, rather than add-on programs or learning at a higher level, seems to be more effective for the gifted and talented. If the educational needs of gifted and talented young people are to be met, the review believes that teachers need more opportunities to develop, trial, evaluate and share such pedagogies.

70.   Students with talent in certain sports are well supported by programs at the Northern Territory Institute of Sport but schools have to work with them to assist students participating in these programs. One school is endeavouring to do this, by recognising learning that takes place outside of school as important and valid and re-organising individual learning programs so students have the time to meet the demands of these special programs. The Northern Territory Music School also offers opportunities for young people to develop their talents through the individual tuition program and enrichment activities such as The Beat, performance ensembles, and Combined Schools Bands. We believe it is essential that schools offer programs to support the full range of intelligences, not just those with gifts in English, mathematics, music, the arts and sport. DEET should also recognise those students who demonstrate outstanding interpersonal and leadership skills. This will be discussed in more detail in a section on student leadership in Chapter 9.

71.   We heard evidence of a culture in some Territory schools that does not value academic success. Some teachers complained of a *culture of mediocrity* among young

people, particularly in the middle years and a student in a regional school pointed out *academic success isn't encouraged…sport is always recognised*, a comment supported by students in a number of schools. However, in the senior years academic success is frequently highly valued as both schools and DEET publicise and celebrate outstanding student achievement in Year 12 and a number of students are rewarded with scholarships from DEET, other government agencies and community organisations. The review commends DEET and schools for acknowledging and supporting these students but would like to see greater recognition of the full range of outstanding student achievement.

72.   Many universities across Australia play an important role in supporting the education of gifted students by offering enrichment activities, personal mentoring and early entry programs into university courses. CDU offers enrichment programs but they are usually one-off activities held each year. They also offer the opportunity for some students to study subjects at the University. The review believes there is potential for greater involvement by the university and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) in the education of gifted secondary students, through the development of ongoing enrichment and mentorship programs for academic and artistic excellence. However, this would require designated positions at the university and the institute to develop and coordinate the programs, allocation of funding, and a commitment to supporting them. Young people from all areas in the Territory should have access to these programs.

73.   If the potential of the Territory's gifted students is to be truly valued and nurtured, then DEET should offer more scholarships to assist these students in deepening and extending the boundaries of their learning both during their schooling and for a number of years after completion. This would encourage the Territory's 'brightest and best' students to realise their potential, not just for personal fulfilment and success, but for the possible benefit of all Territorians.

Learning profiles

74.   Given the diversity and high degree of mobility in our student population, it is essential that a learning profile is developed for each student on entry to school that will carry through with them to the end of schooling. This profile should include details of their strengths and weaknesses as a learner, special needs, attendance, achievement of outcomes in the various band levels of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) and Multi-level Assessment Program (MAP) test results. This data would provide teachers with a rich repository of information on which to design teaching pedagogies and teaching programs to meet the collective and individual needs of students. Some of this data is already being collected in a number of schools as part of a pilot project and is

available electronically on the Student Administration and Management System (SAMS), Curriculum Manager and other modules of the Integris database. The project should be extended to include all schools to allow each student's progress through the various stages of schooling to be tracked. It is important that non-government schools contribute and have access to this database.

Distance delivery

75.   While there was support in some schools for the distance delivery model currently used, there was widespread discontent, particularly in remote Indigenous communities about the pedagogical model and the quality of some of the curriculum materials. A submission from the Northern Territory Group Schools encapsulated these concerns

> *Correspondence is still regarded as the most difficult mode of study and the …method of sending out literacy-based materials supported by telephone link is not suited to ESL Indigenous students. [They] are rarely engaged by the materials and find the whole process boring.*

76.   In recent years a number of distance education courses have been developed for online learning; however, the review team noted some of them are based on outdated pedagogies more suited to print rather than electronic modes of delivery. One submission noted that distance delivery courses should focus on *learning to learn strategies, accessing new technologies rather than the current strongly content-driven materials.* Online lessons and interactive distance learning should also offer increased opportunities for enhancing student learning, but they will only be successful if new pedagogies are developed specifically for these alternative modes of delivery. This will require new skills and understandings for both those who develop and deliver the lessons. This issue will be taken up in Chapter 6. Residential schools are seen as vital to give students a 'sense of belonging' and to assist in breaking down the barriers of geographical isolation.

Teaching and learning with new technologies

77.   Evidence around Australia points to the changing nature and engagement of young people in new technologies. Young people are increasingly capable of relating multi-modally to multi tasks, and are increasingly versatile within the multi-literacies portrayed through new media (Luke, 2003). In particular, young Indigenous people are embracing new media, and pilot multimedia projects are reporting promising results, although many of these are occurring outside of the arena of schools. The initiatives of the Deadly Mob Internet Café and forthcoming Youth Out Bush tour, to encourage and develop support for Young IT Champions on remote communities, are noteworthy examples.

78.   The review team did witness innovative and exciting examples of ICTs being used as tools in supporting collaborative and interactive teaching and learning in schools. There were consistent features underpinning these examples that are worth noting

- the school leadership was supportive and actively encouraging of exploring new models of teaching
- at least one of the teachers was fulfilling the role of IT champion, often because of a personal interest in the area, and was actively involved in challenging and motivating other staff
- teething problems and frustration with the technology were being experienced, but there was a drive to sort, fix and trial new practices despite the problems
- there was an explicit focus on how to use the technology to explore and develop different models for teaching and learning rather than merely how to use or fix the technology
- the technology infrastructure was being integrated into classrooms and these were physically altered to enable the technology to be used freely throughout lessons by teachers and students
- the nature of teaching and learning within the classroom was being transformed. Teachers were actively facilitating and coaching learning rather than directing, and learning was being discussed, debated, generated, and created rather than dispensed.

79.   While the team notes a number of issues relating to infrastructure, IT support and troubleshooting, which are taken up in Chapter 10, some key observations regarding positioning of new technologies in schools need to be made. In some schools, ICT equipment is a dynamic feature of the learning environment. In these, and they include a number of small remote schools, the equipment is accessible to students and staff, is glowing with student-designed screen savers or depicting relevant and interesting facts and pictures. The young people spoke enthusiastically about digitally facilitated videos or music clips they had been making and active engagement in online learning communities. On the other hand, Internet downtimes and time or workload commitments were often cited as impeding these activities.

80.   In other schools, computers are largely confined to laboratories and are an accessory to, rather than integrated within core teaching and learning activities. Many teachers spoke of their limited skills in using the new technologies and few opportunities for professional development in this area. Young people spoke convincingly of their frustrations with lack of access, system downtimes and the old-fashioned ways of 'doing' education. Many were requesting the ability to email assignments and talk to teachers electronically for 'just in time' support when needed. Some teachers, new to the Territory,

spoke of having to *re-learn the way to teach*, due to the lack of integration of ICTs in some of our learning environments.

81.   For many young people, the skills and abilities developed through interacting with technologies from a very early age are not sufficiently harnessed to support or enhance their learning goals. If anything, this threatens to increase the perceived divide between schools and the 'real world' and accentuate issues of irrelevance.

82.   The tension between the changed and changing economic, social and cultural circumstances of the new knowledge-based societies and what schools should teach or do to respond to these is being investigated nationally and internationally (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). There is no doubt that the learning environments of the NT should also respond to these challenges and these in turn must be moulded into the 'best fit' for our diverse contexts and regions. Furthermore, given the geographically dispersed nature, relatively small size and challenging socio-cultural contexts of our schools, the potential of ICTs for expanding content offerings, bringing in the knowledge of 'experts' and enabling new outlooks for economic and social development is critically important for the NT.

83.   At present DEET is engaged in an Interactive Distance Learning project (IDL), a three-year initiative to deliver primary, secondary and vocational courses to students in remote areas. The IDL program allows students and teachers to share their ideas and knowledge using one-way video and multimedia, shared applications, audio conferencing, internet and email. Using a variety of media sources, power point presentations and other devices teachers can share documents with their students and provide previously impossible experiences such as drama, science and music with new emphasis on lesson demonstrations and student centred learning. It also allows students to talk to and engage with their classmates. Teaching studios for the delivery of IDL have been set up in Alice Springs and Darwin and at present 160 sites in remote areas have been linked to the network. A project is currently underway to give teachers training in the teaching and learning practices required for this new mode of delivery.

84.   The integration of ICTs into learning environments in the NT is a key platform for the new territories of teaching and learning recommended in this review. There is a need to enable teachers and learners to utilise life-wide, as well as lifelong (ACDE, 2003) learning experiences to pursue educational goals beyond the boundaries of traditional teaching practices.

85.   Young people, living in an information saturated world - and in many ways there is little difference in this experience between Papunya and Darwin - need new skills, knowledges and critical thinking practices to traverse the new multi-literacies of technologically mediated environments. Many of these technological environments that young people so readily and skilfully engage with, do not as yet exist in schools.

86.   Overall, we were excited by what some of the IT teachers were facilitating but there is still need for more professional development programs. Teachers need to see beyond technical hiccups, systems failure or tell and test packages and be motivated to embrace new skills, to blend, mix and match teaching methods and help construct rather than dispense content and essential learnings. It was also evident that stimulating, interactive e-learning models, using rich media, games and simulations, audio or chat rooms, possible with even the most basic technology, were rarely adopted at the teaching learning interface across the curriculum. Power Point presentations, or indeed 'death by power point', were the most common practice.

87.   In 2002 Lighthouse Schools projects were established in the NT. At present only one secondary school, Nightcliff High, is involved in the project. The school is working with a local primary school to develop models of powerful teaching and learning practice using ICT as a vehicle for whole school change and for systemic change. It is the responsibility of these schools to deliver professional development within curriculum and school leadership teams, and to assist others to design, implement and evaluate similar changes within their own contexts. They are developing and sharing human and material resources with other schools and facilitating ongoing support for NT teachers in the realm of ICT pedagogy and practice. The review sees value in the establishment of more Lighthouse Schools, particularly in remote areas.

88.   The review team sees the need for DEET to develop a clear strategic vision for ICTs in education and establish mechanisms to support innovation in schools and regions to achieve this. We are also of the view that ICTs are not just computers in the classroom or at home but encompass a gamut of technologies – radio, TV, video, games – that could be harnessed much more effectively as mediums for learning, knowledge sharing and generation, and economic futures for Territorians. ICTs are both multifunctional and flexible and can support tailored solutions to educational endeavours as well as enterprising activities. The range of community broadcasting facilities on NT communities and availability of local people skilled in their use is unsurpassed in Australia and yet there is little evidence of using this medium or local skills in supporting rich pedagogies in schools. Indeed, on one community comment was made about young people broadcasting popular music through the public PA system when *they should have been at school.*

89.   The Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) is currently visiting remote
        areas of the NT in order to make plans to trial remote learning, developing models that
        can be piloted, tested, established and proven successful. Under this umbrella,
        companies such as Optus, Telstra, CSM, 'I Love Learning' and many more, are preparing
        to assist in the provision of infrastructure, hardware and software to develop delivery
        models and content and pedagogy, to arrive at remote learning solutions that are
        marketable here and overseas. They are also interested in providing and testing training
        for local people in the community to provide technical and other support to ensure the
        solutions are sustainable. The review believes DEET should tap into these opportunities
        to improve ICT infrastructure and pedagogy in remote schools.

Learning Communities

90.   While the review team saw and heard of examples of good pedagogy, it was rarely
        shared amongst school staff or supported by evidence to show how they contributed to
        improved learning outcomes for students. For the most part, teaching, especially in
        secondary schools is a relatively isolated practice and there is very little direct exposure
        or sharing of teaching pedagogy. In the past both nationally and in the NT, professional
        development for teachers tended to focus on one-off activities, where teachers are given
        a body of information about teaching and learning and expected to go away and adjust
        their practice with little or no evaluation as to whether it actually has changed their
        teaching (Elmore, 2002a).

91.   In recent years the research on pedagogy has stressed the importance of
        establishing professional learning communities both in schools and between schools so
        staff can reflect on their practice and share knowledge and expertise in a collaborative
        supportive environment (Lingard *et al.*, 2002). Improvement in teacher pedagogy requires
        teachers to be research minded using high quality evidence as a basis for their practice.
        Learning communities, therefore, must be places of critical inquiry where teachers initiate,
        trial and evaluate new understandings and methodologies. In the Territory, such learning
        models have been used in leadership, Accelerated Literacy, and ESL professional
        development programs; however, there has been varying emphasis on the use of 'high
        quality' evidence as a basis for practice.

92.   The review team believes that Learning Precincts[11] or schools should establish their own professional learning communities to share and develop pedagogical practices that account for the essential features of dynamic and productive pedagogies, including relevance of learning, intellectual rigour, mutual respect and catering for the diversity of their students' ethnic and social backgrounds as well as their many learning styles and multiple intelligences. They should also focus on the development of pedagogies appropriate to the various stages of schooling. The review found many experienced classroom teachers and thoughtful students who have experienced 10 to 12 years of teaching are, in fact, 'experts' in pedagogy and have much to offer learning communities. We believe that both students and staff should be members of learning communities, and that the learning of both must be monitored, assessed and formally recognised.

93.   These learning communities would need to be supported by a range of DEET staff, particularly those working in Student Services and the Curriculum Services branches. This may require a new approach to the ways these support officers work with teachers and will be discussed in more detail in our proposal for a Teaching and Learning Support Division in Chapter 11. CDU, BIITE and other higher education institutions could provide the necessary research expertise. All members of a learning community, including support personnel, should work together in a supportive and collegial manner, where no one person is seen as 'the authority', but all contributions are respected and valued. Such learning communities would need sufficient funding to allow outside expertise to be brought in as well as to support teacher involvement in the program.

Pedagogical leadership

94.   Pedagogical leadership is vital to the establishment and success of any professional learning community within a school. Some respondents commented that principals place insufficient emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. After all, it is their core business. On the other hand, a number of educational leaders involved in DEET's Leadership Development Program (LDP) have completed an excellent team project on pedagogy, and one of their key recommendations is that all school leaders should create and lead the development of professional learning communities with a sustained and long term focus on pedagogy. They maintain this can be achieved through the establishment of a shared vision and values for pedagogy, the creation of a supportive learning environment which offers the space and time for teachers to reflect on and share understandings and practice, and the judicious use of outside resources for both professional development and ongoing action research (Better Teaching. Better Outcomes. Better Territory, 2003).

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[11] Learning Precinct: An organisational structure where a number of schools and/or educational institutions join together to meet the educational needs of students residing in their locality (see Chapter 7).

95.   Principals are by no means the only pedagogical leaders in schools; Teachers of
        Exemplary Practice (TEP), executive staff and other teachers have much to offer in this
        role. While the review believes pedagogical leadership should be shared in a learning
        community, its ultimate success will depend very heavily on the vision, commitment and
        drive of the Principal and/or Head of Precinct[12].

Research and innovation

96.   Victoria has established Research and Innovation Circles within school clusters to
        examine school organisational structures and learning in accordance with principles of
        research-orientated reflective practice. These Circles grew out of the National Schools
        Network model of Talking Circles, a concept originally used by Indigenous groups to
        illustrate the ways in which they often favour communication. The term signifies that there
        is authentic group knowledge that is shared by all which respects and builds upon views
        and insights (Victorian Schools Innovation Commission, 2002). In many ways they are
        like learning communities but the focus of these research circles is on innovation. The
        Victorian Schools Innovation Commission (2002) believes that innovation is about
        creating supportive environments where new initiatives can be designed, tried, evaluated
        and adapted to address specific educational issues.

97.   Senge *et al.* (2000) maintains that educators often feel trapped by existing
        frameworks and less able to innovate than their business counterparts. The submission
        from DEET's Employment and Training Division pointed out
        *Secondary education…needs to reflect global trends and include innovative practices that will
        meet the needs of the 21*st *Century...attuned to the growing service sector, high-tech and
        knowledge based industries as well as established traditional industries.*
        This quote reflects a common understanding about the future needs of education in the
        Northern Territory that was presented to the review team. Teaching and learning must be
        dynamic and flexible in order to prepare students for constantly changing patterns in local,
        national and global enterprise. Educators are calling for a shift in terms of how teaching
        and learning are constructed and implemented in a knowledge society. Research and
        Innovation circles offer educators the opportunity to explore new learning models that go
        beyond the boundaries of accepted or traditional teaching practice to test groundbreaking
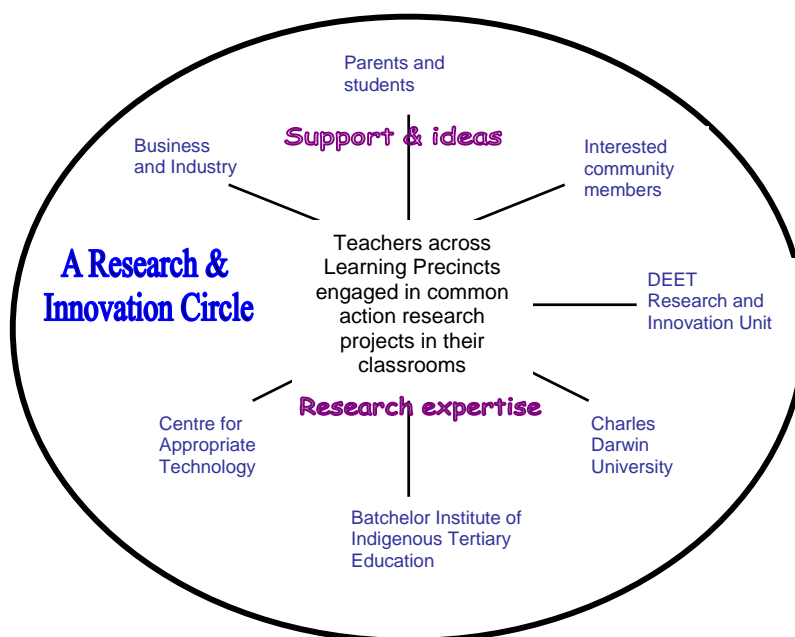   ideas, with the integrity of a research base.

98.   The review team believes that secondary education in the Territory would benefit
        greatly from the establishment of formal Research and Innovation Circles and has

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[12] Head of Precinct: The person in charge of a learning precinct (see Chapter 6).

identified a number of areas for research-based innovation. These include new pedagogies for

- ICT to improve distance or online delivery
- numeracy and mathematics
- literacy practices in Indigenous communities.

Research and Innovation Circles must cut across precincts and regions to tap into the best and most creative minds in the community – teachers, students, parents, elders, business people, researchers from the School for Social Research and Policy at CDU and DEET personnel – to work in a democratic and collaborative manner to develop new pedagogies for targeted areas using action research in schools. System facilitation and support in DEET will be required to set up, drive and sustain the circles.

A Research & Innovation Circle

Parents and students

Support & ideas

Business and Industry

Interested community members

Teachers across Learning Precincts engaged in common action research projects in their classrooms

DEET Research and Innovation Unit

Research expertise

Centre for Appropriate Technology

Charles Darwin University

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

99.   If the Territory is to achieve a high quality secondary education for all students, it must begin with improving teaching and learning. It is teachers and their pedagogies that make the difference. Improving pedagogy must be at the centre of all our work in education, not only in schools and classrooms, but also in DEET itself. This focus should be reflected in all future policies, strategies, business and implementation plans. The system must commit to improving the quality of teaching and learning in all secondary education classrooms or learning sites.

Recommendations

Teaching and Learning

It is recommended that

1. as a matter of priority, NT DEET develop a Teaching and Learning Framework that defines the essential features of good pedagogies and aligns curricula and assessment practices with this Framework, for approval by the NT Board of Studies.

2. NT DEET continue and expand its support for special pedagogies and resources to enhance teaching and learning
    for secondary students with special needs including boys and girls, those at risk in literacy and numeracy, those with disabilities and gifted and talented students through ICT and the new technologies.

3. NT DEET require every NT school to collect relevant data so that every student has a Learning Profile available on the Integris database which records their progress as a learner, detailing any special learning needs, attendance, achievements at the Band levels of the NTCF and MAP test results.

4. NT DEET invite the Australian Information Industry Association to be a partner in developing and funding at least one Lighthouse School in a remote precinct, as a beginning of increased support and development of ICT pedagogy and practice in remote schools NT wide.

5. to improve the quality of teaching and learning, NT DEET

    *   assist principals of schools or heads of precincts to establish professional learning communities where teachers and teaching support staff develop, trial, evaluate and share teaching and learning practices based on the essential features of good pedagogy established in the Teaching and Learning Framework

    *   establish a Research and Innovation Unit to facilitate and support the development of Research and Innovation Circles with research support from other relevant providers such as the School of Social Research and Policy at CDU and BIITE. The purpose of these Circles is to explore teaching and learning models that go beyond the boundaries of accepted or traditional pedagogies and test new ideas.

CHAPTER 4
CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

> Young people have unique strengths and capabilities that can be drawn out through learning programs designed to meet their individual needs so they achieve the skills and knowledges required of them to create healthy, happy, sustainable and productive futures.
>
> Young people and their parents have the right to know the level of outcomes they have achieved against personal, Territory and national benchmarks at various times during their school career.

1. Curriculum, assessment and reporting are key elements of effective teaching and learning. All three, together with pedagogy, provide a framework for teaching practice to be aligned to achieve the best possible outcomes for students. Over past decades, curriculum has been the focus of much educational review and reform across Australia and in the NT. However, it is possible for curriculum to be revised and rewritten endlessly, without gains in student outcomes. Ultimately, the delivered curriculum is shaped by the pedagogies teachers use in particular learning sites (Luke 1999). Similarly, assessment is often at the forefront of educational debate and, particularly at the level of the TER, cannot help but shape the curriculum or drive pedagogy. In our view, as form follows function in building design, so curriculum and assessment ought to follow the nature of the chosen pedagogy.

2. In recent years, the Territory has adopted outcomes-based curricula for various stages of schooling, giving teachers the opportunity to design programs of learning to suit the needs of individual students. In the 1990s, enterprise and vocational learning and VET became important and popular curriculum choices for students and we believe these should be recognised now as an integral part of the school curriculum, not as separate activities. Moreover, these changes to curriculum and new curriculum choices must be accompanied by fresh approaches to teaching and learning, as discussed in the previous chapter.

3. Assessment practices at all levels need to be aligned to these new curricula and the new Teaching and Learning Framework we have proposed. To provide teachers with a basis for identifying the needs of each individual student, and teaching to them, particularly in the foundation years (Year 7 and Year 10), we have suggested that a Learning Profile, which contains assessments and other diagnostic aids, travels with the student throughout their schooling. Increasingly, students are achieving outcomes in activities that occur outside of school and this learning must be acknowledged, valued and accounted for in our assessment practices. It is vital that teachers and schools also

recognise the full range of student achievements and give accurate and useful reports to parents and other caregivers about the level of outcomes achieved in class, school, Territory and national assessment programs.

Curriculum

4. The Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) was developed in response to a recommendation from the 1999 Curriculum Review to develop a single curriculum framework for students in the compulsory years of schooling. The same review also recommended the adoption of the South Australian Curriculum Statements (SSABSA, 2003) as frameworks for the development Year 11 (Stage 1 courses), rather than having the Northern Territory continue to develop and implement its own courses. The Curriculum Review argued that, given that NT students had been doing South Australian courses and the attendant assessment processes in Year 12 (Stage 2) for many years, it made sense for all senior school courses to be placed under the same curriculum and assessment framework.

Northern Territory Curriculum Framework

5. The review heard many positive responses to the NTCF as it provides a general framework for teaching and learning outcomes, while allowing schools the flexibility to cater for the diversity of students and teaching contexts. As one teacher explained, *the NTCF allows us to be innovative within a framework as long as we meet the outcomes.* Some maintained the framework allows for comparability of outcomes and a measure of accountability. Others were not convinced, pointing to the lack of parity in the benchmark indicators. Still others were concerned that many outcomes are too ambiguous and do not give teachers sufficient direction, so it was not uncommon to hear comments like

> *The NTCF is good but some of the outcomes need refining. They are too general and teachers need more to guide them, particularly with the scope and sequence in each learning area.*

A number of teachers working on remote communities expressed a need for syllabus documents and practical examples to give them more precise direction.

6. There was some agreement across consultations and submissions that secondary schools generally have been slower in their uptake of the NTCF than their primary school counterparts. Many respondents stated that not enough secondary teachers have used the NTCF to change their teaching. Teachers pointed either to a lack of time and/or support as the reason for this; others believe it is because secondary teachers have limited knowledge of outcomes-based learning. Some are reluctant to change their practices to embrace the key principles of EsseNTial Learnings (the generic skills all learners should develop), flexibility, inclusivity and lifelong learning. Regardless of the

reasons, there were many comments in consultations and submissions that agreed with the view that

> *there is still a need for more professional development especially with teachers new to the Territory and those cynics who are waiting for the NTCF to go away.*

7.   There is limited explicit information on pedagogy in the NTCF, although the EsseNTial Learnings with their focus on student needs, and the principles of outcomes-based learning encourage teachers to re-think the teaching and learning required for students to demonstrate particular outcomes. A senior curriculum officer has reflected that

> *in hindsight pedagogy may have been a more powerful place to start when developing systemic alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and practice.*

However, given the capability of NT teachers for coping with change, supported by a survey of teacher attitudes at the time, and that the Curriculum Services Branch had a clear mandate for a curriculum revision, a deliberate decision was made to change the curriculum and use it to drive change in pedagogy and assessment. The officer quoted above believes that the majority of NT teachers are now ready and willing to embrace the new pedagogies required for the effective system-wide implementation of outcomes-focused learning advocated by the NTCF. The review believes the NT is ready for the push to engage pedagogy and the curriculum together as a cohesive whole – the 'what' and the 'how' together.

8.   This is supported by considerable evidence from the submissions and consultations that indicated that teachers want more support for delivering the new curriculum. The 'what' was well in place, but the 'how' was still vague, and left to the individual teacher. Unfortunately, almost anyone can say what should be taught, but it takes a teacher to teach it well. The review heard many comments like

> *the NTCF is still seen by many teachers as a bit of a mystery. Some work is required to show teachers different modes of delivery* and *we need help with pedagogies to suit this new framework.*

While the Layer Two Curriculum Support Materials currently being developed may assist teachers in implementing the new NTCF, no matter how you shape, re-shape or prescribe the curriculum it is a teacher's pedagogical practice that will have greatest impact on the quality of students' learning and the outcomes they achieve.

9.   Therefore we have recommended in the previous chapter that the focus of teacher support must shift from developing curriculum materials to the development and implementation of a framework for pedagogy that aligns curriculum and assessment practices at all stages of schooling with the essential features of good pedagogy, as set out in that chapter.

South Australian Curriculum Statements

10.   The adoption of the South Australian Curriculum Statements in Year 11 (Stage 1) has allowed for a more flexible approach to both curriculum and pedagogy in the senior years. However, there is a general view in submissions and consultations that teachers have not taken advantage of the flexibility of these statements in developing new Stage 1 courses, as it seems many were reluctant to adapt the curriculum content or to change their pedagogy to meet the needs of students. One submission stated that

teachers need to make use of the individual programming possibilities of the senior secondary curriculum as opposed to adapting an old paradigm to the new statements.

This is important as the poor retention rates in Years 11 and 12 (see Chapter 2) point to an urgent need for new approaches.

11.   Many of the Year 12 syllabus statements are still driven by the demands of the final assessment task (particularly exams), and as such, are at odds with notions of outcomes-based, student-centred learning and the range of career pathways available to students. A significant number of respondents queried the need for exams at all, questioning whether we should tailor our NTCE to meet the needs of university entrance when only approximately 18% of students nationally go on to higher education in the years after completing school. Students also challenged the validity of external examinations as instruments of assessment. One student questioned

Do exams really represent your capabilities? Exams don't count in lots of jobs. It seems to be tied up with tradition.

12.   A number of teachers complained about the relevance of the Higher Education Selection Subjects (HESS) Restricted courses, formerly School Assessed Subjects (SAS) designed for the students of average academic ability. A teacher summed up these frustrations

There is too much unnecessary written content in these courses. It turns kids off these subjects and they often drop out of them.

Territory students are not performing as well as South Australian students in HESS Restricted subjects (see Chapter 2).

13.   The recent introduction of Integrated Studies and Extension Studies, as well as the rapid growth of Community Studies, reflect a growing recognition by both educators and students of the potential of a cross-disciplinary, student-centred approach in the senior years. But the power of the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) should not be underestimated. It remains the most important outcome of schooling for a significant number of students, their parents and employers, whether those students are seeking entrance to higher education, TAFE courses or the world of work. While many of those consulted would like to see a range of different methods of assessing student performance in Year 12, until that occurs the pedagogy and curriculum content will be shaped by the demands of

traditional assessment. What is needed is a re-education of the community to accept and value the variety of pathways so that students do not automatically opt for courses to gain a TER when in fact they are better suited to other pathways. This should be a priority for career advisers and Pathways Mentors[13] in schools. The problem with any such education program is that the sophisticated arguments of the parents, teachers and university staff who speak for the 18% who go on to university, far outweigh the arguments of the rest (if they put any forward).

14.   Current trends toward the development of nationally consistent curriculum outcomes may lead the way for significant change in curriculum and assessment practices as well as pedagogy. The Territory must be in a position to be responsive to the potential for substantial change in these areas. Forums such as professional learning communities, as described in the previous chapter, need to be established where curriculum and pedagogical innovation can be explored, tried and evaluated by teachers, so the Territory is well placed to respond quickly and confidently to any proposed changes.

Enterprise and vocational learning and Vocational Education and Training (VET)

15.   The review team believes that it is paramount for the distinction between enterprise and vocational learning and VET to be made explicit. VET is a separate system directed at people achieving nationally defined competencies, and is usually only for Years 10, 11 and 12. It is 'a national machine' which is not under the control of schools or of DEET, and to make it flexible enough to meet NT needs will require suggestion and negotiation with ANTA. VET courses should not be used as just a 'taster', but should require a full commitment both by the school and by the student. It is important then that VET subjects be timetabled along with school-based ones so there is no conflict, and planning for VET input to curriculum choices needs to be strategic, targeted, and perhaps related to a career, though not necessarily. Schools have to be careful that students do not get onto a 'certificate treadmill'*,* doing one certificate after another with no real vocational end in sight.

16.   Enterprise and vocational learning, on the other hand, are part of the NTCF and under the NT's control: that is, their content and delivery can be a matter for decision at the school, precinct and DEET levels. Thus, enterprise and vocational learning, as encapsulated in the NTCF for Years 7–10, need to become core aspects of teaching and learning within the broader curriculum. The opportunity for our young people to engage simultaneously in education and community and enterprise development can provide significant opportunities for the authentic, 'real world' learning they speak about so keenly.

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[13] Pathways Mentors: staff who assist students in the senior years to select appropriate career pathways, seek career advice and choose relevant courses of learning (see Chapter 5).

In the senior years, value adding through VET courses and diversified industry based learning experiences, particularly where these are recognised and mentored, can support our young people in this critical transition from schooling to valued social and economic participation.

17.   Vocational learning is an important cross-curricula perspective and enterprise is a separate strand in the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) learning area of the NTCF. However, the review believes the strand needs to be updated by curriculum writers to reflect the links between enterprise and livelihoods education and lifelong learning, as well as detailing appropriate pedagogy. Many of the enterprise or vocational learnings cited in submissions emphasised the importance of external programs like MindMatters or the Real Game series, competitions such as the Youth Business Award or challenges like the Defence 2020 Youth Challenge.

18.   Schools and teachers varied greatly in their enthusiasm and take-up of these valuable activities, often citing *workload* or *limited advance notice* as reasons for not pursuing such opportunities. Some schools however, are instigating cutting edge vocational learning activities, such as a community learning unit based near one town high school. A suggestion was made by the review's Reference Group that
> *In regional and urban contexts some schools might well become 'enterprise learning centres' with a specific brief or industry focus. We acknowledge though that this is very difficult to arrange unless a school has an industry 'next door' that is sufficiently willing to be involved and not just because it sees some commercial advantage in the arrangement.*

19.   It is evident that many teachers and schools are at a critical point in wanting to pursue authentic enterprise and vocational learning and this must be supported through strategic enabling structures that *make the schools more transparent to…and utilised by the community*. The suggested framework for these structures is outlined in Chapter 6. There is also a need to strengthen the enterprise and vocational learning component of the NTCF to cater for young people's learning needs.

20.   At the other end of the continuum of offerings to secondary students are VET certificates. VET is an industry-driven national training system that positions itself as building Australia's future work skills. The key components of VET are portable qualifications known as Training Packages, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and a rigorous quality framework, the AQTF (Australian Quality Training Framework). In the NT, there are two large public providers of VET (Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education), numerous small private providers, and a number of secondary schools that are also RTOs. VET programs are being offered in the senior years of schooling in most towns in the Territory, although access is better in some places than others. There are also students undertaking school-based

apprenticeships; and VET programs are being offered, intermittently, to 14–19 year olds on remote communities.

21.   In the NT in 2002, there were 22 500 people participating in VET. Some 44% of these (9 800) were Indigenous, of whom 77% were located in remote communities. It is difficult to identify the VET in Schools component based on the data, although 21% (5 200) of all enrolments were from people aged 14 and under to 19 years. The Allen Consulting Group issues paper for the review of VET in Schools (2003) identifies 1 495 students enrolled in VET in Schools in the NT. This suggests there are about 3 000 students of school age doing some form of VET (NCVER Statistics, 2001).

22.   Despite the hype of the Training Reform Agenda, training packages, international best practice, flexible and online learning, toolboxes, quality frameworks and recognition of prior learning, there is mixed research-based evidence about the impact and effectiveness of VET. More people are participating in VET than ever before but those who are moving through to work tend to be those who have gained significant knowledge and experience from other education sectors, that is Year 12 or a university degree. Industry remains only peripherally involved in the system, especially small business. The fact that small businesses report great difficulty in understanding the complexity of the system and funding the training of workers who are more than likely to move on, raises important issues for the Territory where this sector is both large and growing (ANTA, 2003).

23.   In some areas, access to these courses and the associated work placements is facilitated by workplace coordinators. In others, access is limited because of inflexibility or critical clashes in school timetabling. In remote areas of the Territory, access to VET courses is largely a hit and miss affair. Young Indigenous people and their families spoke often of wanting *more VET* courses because they saw these as a means to *explore more options and be exposed to different ways.* They also spoke of wanting a more direct link between learning and the application of this learning to meaningful activities, enterprise and work in the community. As stated by one remote teacher

> *Most would like to work in the community but there is a general belief that only white fellas can do these jobs.*

24.   In the towns of the Territory, young people also spoke of being interested in doing VET courses but many felt they could not make the choice between secondary education and VET due to clashes in timetabling with core year level subjects or the fact that the VET option is perceived as 'second rate' education. In many submissions and consultations the benefits of VET offerings were clearly articulated (although on some

occasions issues of quality were raised), as well as the need to link VET programs to career pathways and ongoing mentoring.

25. Teachers and students also raised issues about the difficulty of having some VET units or courses count towards Stage 2 of the NTCE or towards a TER. Overall the value of VET was articulated as enabling a range of alternate pathways for students. It should be noted, however, that these pathways are currently lock step and there are limited opportunities for students to change track and enter or leave pathways at a number of points. As one teacher commented

> *We need to promote the value and validity of different pathways. How kids get from education to a viable future is not linear; the learning pathway is crazy paving.*

The Reference Group pointed out

> *VET must continue to be better integrated into secondary school as another recognised pathway, like the NTCE.*

Many respondents said that VET must be recognised as a valid part of the school curriculum not as an 'add-on' or extra program. A submission from DEET's Employment and Training Division stated

> *VET should be integrated into the core secondary curriculum. A VET course should become a compulsory element of Stage 1 and...this compulsory VET component of the NTCE should be funded from within current school resources.*

26. While not supporting compulsory VET subjects, the review believes the integration of VET will only happen if schools stop relying on extra funding for all VET programs and begin to allow for the staffing and financing of enterprise and vocational learning courses from within school staffing resources and budgets. This will require significant changes in the school curriculum and the allocation of teaching resources to this new need, and the Reference Group made a number of interesting proposals in relation to this. They believe there should be more opportunities for people with enterprise or industry experience to be 'fast-tracked' into secondary teaching or to work in schools with teachers. Conversely, teaching staff require opportunities to have industry and enterprise experience. The question of pre- service training and professional development for enterprise and vocational learning teaching will be addressed in Chapter 9.

Assessment, reporting and certification

27. Pedagogy, curriculum and assessment must be aligned to achieve the best possible educational results and outcomes for Territory young people. The NTCF is based on the principles of outcomes-based assessment that seek to give teachers scope in determining the range and nature of assessment practices. Teachers are encouraged to negotiate with students to gather rich and relevant data over time on which to base judgments about student achievements against the various band levels. The South

Australian Curriculum Statements and Stage 2 syllabus documents are also based on the principles of outcomes-based assessment but they prescribe particular assessment requirements and weightings, though teachers have some flexibility in choosing assessment tasks. Assessment for VET courses is competency based, which is in conflict with the way other school subjects are assessed, and this method is not well supported by universities for admission to them. A competency attained is very different from excellence achieved.

28.   There are three elements in the term 'assessment': there is the process of assessment itself; there are the various kinds of reports and their audiences that are the basis of the assessment; and there is the certification (of various kinds) that can be applied as a result of assessment, with the overlap that a certificate can also be a report. The issue, though, is to make sure that the three elements – assessment, reporting and certification – are appropriate for the audiences and users at different levels of the schooling system.

Assessment

29.   No one single form of assessment meets the needs of teachers, students, parents, schools and DEET. Teachers use diagnostic assessment tools to assess student learning and conduct formative assessments to monitor student progress. Summative assessments are used to establish student progress at various band levels in the NTCF or to determine the extent to which students have met the learning outcomes of the SA Curriculum Statements. The review team heard of examples of good assessment practice. These occurred where teachers set intellectually demanding tasks linked to classroom practices rather than being 'add-on' tests or assignments that were unrelated to student learning. These teachers were also using a range of formative and summative assessment tasks to measure student performance in a variety of contexts.

30.   There are, however, gaps that need to be addressed. Many senior students complained about the number of assessment items, the inappropriate timing of assessments, and the extra stress they caused. Students would like more opportunity to negotiate assessments, and complained of the heavy reliance on tests or examinations as assessment items. These are issues that should be acknowledged and addressed by teachers and executive staff in schools.

31.   One submission noted *there is a need for more systematic professional development around assessment practices in the middle years*. A number of teachers complained about the ambiguity of the learning outcomes in the NTCF and the range of levels of difficulty in the indicators that prevented them from establishing parity of standards. Layer Two Support Materials and exemplars of evidence of learning for the range of outcomes

are being included within Explore NT (the central electronic resource collection) to assist teachers with the assessment of student work. In addition, Evidence of Learning Folders containing a set of hard copy samples of work in the areas of literacy and numeracy will soon be provided to schools.

32.   The review notes that these initiatives should assist teachers in the middle years in their assessment of student work. Some teachers requested that moderation be introduced, at least for core subjects, to achieve a parity of standards, although many also saw its value for professional development. Some schools have organised their own moderation procedures and told the review that it has assisted teachers in establishing their understandings of standards.

33.   The review suggests that all schools and precincts should make time and provision for moderation in literacy and numeracy to establish a parity of standards using samples of work available on Explore NT or in the Evidence of Learning folders.

34.   Calls were made for improved assessment to allow for the longitudinal tracking of student learning over time. Several Alice Springs respondents said that Multi-level Assessment Program (MAP) testing was needed at the end of Year 6 or at least fairly early in Year 7 to accommodate the needs of schools in that part of the Territory where Year 7 is taught in high schools. Similarly, a respondent during the consultation with Curriculum Services Branch said

> *we are pushing to include Year 9 in the assessment program. There is a gap in the system's knowledge of literacy and numeracy standards. ... Furthermore, we have no large-scale assessment in middle yea*rs.

If DEET were to decide that Year 9 MAP tests should be administered in the NT, the results can become part of each student's Learning Profile. The review believes that it is important for teachers, parents and students to have a wide range of information about student learning growth and achievement against Territory and national benchmarks.

35.   While MAP tests can offer information about specific domains and aspects of literacy and numeracy for the student cohort, they have limited validity in assessing the performance of individual students. If parents and students are to be given MAP test results, schools must explain there is substantial uncertainty in these results at the student level. MAP test results for individual students should be supplemented with a range of other assessment data (Adams, 2003).

36.   Nevertheless, it is important for teachers, schools and DEET to have data about the literacy and numeracy levels of the whole student cohort, but it must be supported by professional development on how to analyse, interpret and evaluate data for planning and for reporting to other stakeholders. It must also be supported by specific testing at the

individual level that will assist with the diagnosis of problems and specific learning difficulties.

37.   Earlier in this report we have introduced a new concept of 'technacy', to parallel those of literacy and numeracy. We have defined technacy as the ability to understand, negotiate and manipulate technologies and their applications in the world around us. This includes but is not limited to Information and Communication or digitised technologies. Every young person these days is familiar with TV and video, with DVDs and CDs and the machines that play them. Most of them are more familiar with these and with video and computer games and ATMs and calculators, than they are with books and numbers on the page. Many are far more at home with computers, mobile phones and any number of electronic devices than are the adults around them. Technacy also refers to the underlying understanding of how things work, those practical learnings that underpin the ability to diagnose the cause of a leaking tap, and perhaps to fix it, or even design a new one. Being 'technate' implies the ability to engage critically with the environmental, human and technical aspects of technologies and the uses to which they are put (Seeman, 2000).

38.   We believe that technacy skills are as basic and as critical to living in the 21st Century as are literacy and numeracy skills. We have also said that work is not now generally available unless a person has sound literacy, numeracy and technacy skills. To fulfil the expectations of the modern workplace, or even just to negotiate the modern home and world outside it, young people need to be technate as much as they need to be literate and numerate. Their literacy and numeracy skills are benchmarked by Multi-level Assessment Programs at Years 3, 5 and 7, and we are recommending also at Year 9. It is time that a similar process is applied to technacy, and that MAP tests are established to benchmark those skills as well. If we are to truly understand and support young people in the skills they need to survive and flourish in a technological world, it is time to define the developmental stages and sequencing of learning for technacy, perhaps starting with keyboarding skills as parallel to handwriting, and going from there.

SSABSA

39.   The review team was presented with a range of opinions on the use of SSABSA to oversee the assessment and certification of students for the NTCE. Some teachers made comments like *we are short served by SSABSA* and that

> *We do not get the level of professional development or support received by teachers in South Australia.*

Curriculum officers for the senior years acknowledge there have been problems in the past but believe the service has improved in recent years, pointing to increased

opportunities for NT teachers to be involved in curriculum development, moderation and exam marking panels as evidence.

40.   Other respondents acknowledged the importance of SSABSA. One respondent commented

> *SSABSA has provided a standard; it's good for our kids to go up against a broad range of students. It is such a big engine that it keeps us up to date in subject areas… To change from SSABSA would need an enormous amount of teacher support…. It's not worth it if we are not to move to a clearly better system.*

Nevertheless, in the past five years NT students have scored on average five points less than SA students on the TER (see Chapter 2). While the reasons for the overall performance of NT students may be complex and varied, the review believes it is crucial that curriculum officers in the senior years work with schools, SSABSA and the Northern Territory moderators and exam markers to determine the reasons for this difference and devise strategies to improve NT student performance. It is suggested that these stakeholder groups work together to set realistic targets and improve overall student performance in the NTCE.

Recognition of learning outside the school

41.   At present, many students are extensively involved in extra-curricular or out-of-school activities where they meet a range of learning outcomes that are not always recognised by schools. Students participate in part-time work, clubs, community service organisations, sporting teams, award courses and work as carers for children and adults, where they develop many essential learnings and meet learning outcomes in a variety of ways. It is essential that such learning is valued, recognised and accounted for when assessing student performance. At present, SSABSA has established a policy to recognise learning that occurs outside of school, including non-formal (achieved through an organised program of instruction with learning objectives) and informal learning (achieved in the community through experience). SSABSA, in consultations with stakeholders, is developing a set of procedures by which assessors can establish equivalence of learning for outcomes achieved by students in such activities (Keightley and Bower, 2003).

42.   This is an important initiative, as it will extend the range of options for many young people, particularly Indigenous students who may be involved in community-based, livelihood or enterprise activities. The policy is also based on Students at Risk action research projects, which argued for more customised learning contracts for students with complex lives. There is no similar policy or set of procedures to acknowledge community-based learning in the NTCF.

43.   The review suggests that DEET develop a policy and set of procedures to acknowledge learning outcomes achieved by students in contexts beyond the classroom through non-formal and informal community-based learning.

44.   The SSABSA Recognition Policy has also allowed for recognition of learning delivered by schools and other providers where students gain a qualification under the AQTF. This means students can choose from a range of VET subjects and courses and have them accredited towards Stage 1 of their NTCE. In Stage 2, students can choose from a number of SSABSA VET subjects, and if they complete extra assessment components these subjects can count towards a TER.

45.   The review suggests that DEET pursue with SSABSA the development of assessment tools and measures for students in the senior years that recognise multiple educational and career pathways with variable entry and exit points.

Reporting and certification

46.   A number of parents complained to the review that student reports were often difficult to understand because they contained educational jargon, too much information or insufficient detail. Parents frequently told the review they were not well informed about reporting practices in secondary schools and felt locked out of their child's education. Even students would like more information about their achievements. A group commented

We don't get grades on our assignments any more and it's difficult to know how we are going. They were equally concerned if they did not receive teachers' comments on their work. Students indicated they needed ongoing, comprehensive feedback about their progress in all subjects in order to improve their knowledge and skills. The review also noted concern about the lack of uniformity in school annual reports to DEET. These are issues that should be addressed by schools or precincts.

47.   The matter of celebrating or providing official results is the certification element of assessment, and certificates should be designed to be specific to audiences and needs. Teachers may design and present class certificates for achievement of students in various categories. Schools will have a system of certificates to acknowledge student progress in various areas to be presented at, for example, school assemblies. State and Territory systems have certification to mark 'official' recognition of student achievements, such as the NTCE. Some respondents would like to see certificates issued to mark the end of particular stages of schooling. One school community said

We would like a return to a Year 10 certificates so the students have something to aim for.

The review believes schools and precincts should formally acknowledge the completion of each stage of schooling so transition points are recognised by parents and the community and are meaningful for students.

48.   There was also a level of concern amongst respondents that certificates of completion must recognise meaningful achievement and not be awarded as encouragement. A number of respondents in the consultations commented that Indigenous students are often recognised for very small achievements such as the completion of a module for a VET course. The community often celebrates these achievements but *in reality the achievements are modest.* Many teachers felt there needed to be *more honesty about student achievement.* This is particularly important with the rollout of secondary education to remote communities. While a number of students in future years are likely to complete their NTCE, it must be explained to parents and caregivers that unless students achieve a Tertiary Entrance Rank their access to and success in higher education courses will be limited. The review believes students' achievements should be celebrated at class, school and system levels, but teachers and schools must provide accurate information about the level of achievement, and schools or precincts should offer clear, accurate reports to all stakeholders and regular information sessions to parents and caregivers to explain school reports.

49.   Teachers and students in the Territory are living in educationally exciting but challenging times. If both groups are willing to take up the flexibility offered by the new curricula and assessment frameworks, teaching and learning in the middle and senior years should be a productive and rewarding activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting

It is recommended that

6.   to support the ongoing implementation of the NTCF in secondary schools NT DEET
- as part of the 2005 review of the NTCF, continue to work with teachers to refine, define and exemplify outcomes and benchmark indicators of the NTCF

- as part of the 2005 review of the NTCF, revise the enterprise strand in the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) learning area and vocational learning as a cross-curricular perspective of the NTCF, to reflect the importance of vocational, enterprise and livelihoods learning in the later middle years.

- provide professional development programs for effective pedagogy to support secondary teachers and other educators in the implementation of the NTCF.

7. to offer a more relevant and appropriate curriculum for the range of students in the senior years, NT DEET
   - work with SSABSA to improve further the relevance and flexibility of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 curriculum statements to be more appropriate to the needs of Territory students
   - work with Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) to improve the nature, flexibility and recognition of VET courses in the senior years
   - expand the current range of vocational, livelihood and VET curriculum and pedagogies to occupy a greater part of the courses on offer in the senior years (10 –12).

8. in order to improve and extend assessment and reporting practices in secondary schools, NT DEET
   - provide professional support to schools and precincts to improve assessment practices, using samples of work from the Evidence of Learning folders and the electronic data base, Explore NT, for school/precinct-based literacy and numeracy moderation
   - support teachers and other educators to analyse, interpret and evaluate assessment data for planning and reporting purposes
   - introduce Year 9 MAP testing in literacy and numeracy
   - develop a policy and set of procedures to acknowledge learning outcomes achieved by students in the later middle years in contexts beyond the classroom
   - work with SSABSA, secondary schools and moderators to improve overall student performance in the NTCE
   - assist staff in schools and precincts to provide meaningful assessment data and reports to parents at regular intervals throughout the school year, and relevant certification on the completion of each stage of schooling.

9. the NT Government, through the Minister, take up with the appropriate Ministerial Council the feasibility of a national testing regime for technacy to parallel testing for literacy and numeracy so that standards can be established for these skills; and that NT DEET undertake preliminary work in this area which may be presented at appropriate forums to bring the issue onto the national education agenda.

CHAPTER 5
STAGES OF SCHOOLING

The successful engagement in and completion of schooling creates opportunities for young people to achieve satisfying educational outcomes, leading to an increased range of choices about their future.

During the years of schooling, young people move through progressive stages of physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.

These stages of development must be reflected in the organisational stages of teaching and learning during schooling.

For all young people to enjoy a purposeful and productive educational journey, schools must monitor and guide their learning pathways, career aspirations and eventual destinations.

1.   While the review has established in Chapter 3 that students in all age groups require dynamic and purposeful pedagogies and a rich and varied curriculum, it also recognises that students in the various stages of schooling have discrete pedagogical, curricular and social needs to be addressed to prepare them for a variety of learning, career or livelihood pathways. Schools must be equipped to meet the distinctive requirements of students in the different phases of their cognitive and social development. This may require not only changes to curriculum and pedagogy but also to the organisational and physical structure of schools or learning sites. It also necessitates major changes to the pre-service training and professional development of teachers.

The development of different stages of schooling

2.   In traditional school structures there are two distinct stages of schooling: primary and secondary. This system was designed a long time ago for a very different social and economic world and there is general agreement by many that it no longer meets the more complex social and learning needs of today's young people. During the 1980s, the stages of schooling were further divided into early childhood, upper primary, junior secondary and senior secondary in response to a growing awareness by educators that a different approach to teaching and curriculum was needed at different stages of learning. However, the focus of educational reform was on the senior years. As employment opportunities for unskilled and unqualified workers diminished, more young people were either choosing or forced to stay at school, and there was growing support for the formation of senior colleges to cater for the particular social and learning needs of senior students. While some secondary schools broke into sub-schools, with junior and senior sections, a number of separate senior colleges and junior schools were established.

Nevertheless, in most schools the traditional year-by-year approach to teaching and learning prevailed.

Senior colleges

3.	Following the development of senior colleges in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory to cater for students in Years 11 and 12, similar institutions were established in the Territory at Casuarina Secondary College (later to become Casuarina Senior College) and Sadadeen Senior College (later to become Centralian College). Over the years the colleges have expanded the number and range of their courses to include VET and School Based Apprenticeships. They also developed special programs for students who require extra assistance with the transition from school to work, as well as a range of programs to cater for specific career pathways, often in response to identified industry requirements. These programs are frequently linked with other educational or training providers and learning may occur off site, but the colleges are responsible for their organisation and funding.

4.	Of equal importance is the fact that both senior colleges foster a mature learning environment to meet the social needs of their senior students and to prepare them for the transition from school to further education and training or work. Comments from both the consultations and the submissions revealed that there is strong support from teachers, students and parents for such institutions as they *encourage students to mature earlier and this means they have an effortless transition from school to further education and work*. However, the review also heard comments that these colleges do not meet the needs of students who are less confident in their learning or lack the necessary self-discipline to cope with an independent learning environment.

Primary secondary transfer

5.	There is no consistency between the various state and territory education systems in Australia in relation to when each particular stage of secondary schooling starts or finishes. Currently, in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania Year 7 students are placed in secondary schools, while in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia Year 7 is in the primary school. Efforts to introduce a uniform transfer point have been frustrated largely because of cost, but a recent push by the Commonwealth government towards national consistency in school starting ages may eventually lead to an agreed point of transition from primary to secondary. Given that the most heavily populated states have Year 7 in high school, it is more likely that this will be the nationally agreed transition point.

6.   In the Territory, Year 7 students are located in high schools in Central Australia and in many non-government schools; however, in the Top End, Year 7 students are in primary schools. A number of remote schools have grouped Year 7 with their secondary-aged students. Many review respondents believe that, given the mobile nature of the Territory population, it is imperative that there is a uniform transfer point from primary to secondary in the NT. This was of particular concern to Defence families. Some parents and students were concerned that Year 7 students are not ready for the more independent learning environment of the high school. However, the review team noted that students in Central Australia had successfully made this transition for many years and this was supported by evidence from a 1992 review of secondary education that reported *students overwhelmingly endorsed the earlier transfer* (Cameron *et al.*, 1992).

Development of middle years schooling

7.   Since the early 1990s there has been growing support both in Australia and internationally for middle schooling to meet the specific needs of students in the middle years, usually identified as those somewhere between the ages of ten and fifteen (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996; Eyers *et al.*, 1992; Schools Council, 1993). Across Australia there are many definitions of what constitutes the middle years of schooling, but the Curriculum Services Branch in DEET considers the middle years to cover Years 5 to 9. As this review has been concerned with secondary education, the consultations and submissions have discussed and raised issues about what might be considered the later middle years, that is from Years 7 to 9, and these are the focus of this discussion.

8.   In Australia much of the push for a different pedagogical and curriculum approach in the middle years has been in response to the unique educational needs of young people during early adolescence, a distinct developmental stage where an accelerated period of physical and social development occurs (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996; Eyers *et al.*, 1992; Schools Council, 1993). Adolescence is often associated with challenging, unruly or risk-taking behaviour; however, not all young people are difficult and it must be remembered that adolescence is both socially constructed and biologically based. Evidence has shown that young people today are physically maturing at an earlier age than their parents and grandparents did, and many believe they acquire a higher level of sophistication earlier than previous generations. Due to the varied patterns of young people's social, emotional and physical development, a group of students in early adolescence is more diverse than at any other time (Loundsberry, 2000). Additionally, increased levels of clinical depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide occur during this stage of development (Carr-Gregg & Shale, 2001).

9.   Recent studies by neuroscientists have found that while 95% of the human brain has developed by the age of six, there is a growth spurt in the brains of young people just before puberty (Geidd *et al.,* 1999). They believe this brain growth during the pre-puberty years gives enormous potential for learning new skills in a range of areas, and the sorts of activities engaged in during this period are critical in maximising future learning potential. Geidd (2003) maintains that what young people do during their adolescent years, whether it be playing sport, learning a musical instrument or playing computer games, will have a significant influence on how the brain is sculpted for future learning. Moreover, his research has found that the part of the brain that is responsible for organisation and planning is not fully developed at this stage; so expecting young people to have these adult skills is unreasonable. While they want to be treated like young adults they do not always behave as such and teachers and schools need to account for this challenge when dealing with them. These new understandings about the development of the human brain during adolescence raise questions for schools and teachers about appropriate ways to help young people realise their potential to learn during the early and later middle years without placing unfair expectations on them. Teachers should follow the implications of this research for their pedagogy as it unfolds.

10.   Research has shown that school-related learning usually slows down or stagnates during the middle years, and there is greater differentiation in the range of achievement. The transition between primary and secondary schooling is not always smooth, with many students making little or no progress in their first year of secondary education and a number of them bored with learning, disruptive in classes and alienated from school (Barrat, 1998; Eyers *et al.*, 1992; Hill *et al.*, 1996). Evidence from the submissions and consultations spoke of student under-achievement in the later middle years being linked to lack of engagement in learning and disruptive behaviour, and for some, poor attendance and suspension. Many teachers referred to Years 8 and 9 as *an educational wasteland.*

11.   More recent research on middle schooling maintains that a different approach in these years has been driven in part as a response to the changing demographics and new cultures that shape our schools in an increasingly complex, global world (Luke *et al.*, 2003). The increasing breakdown of the family unit, as well as changing economic and employment conditions have exacerbated poverty and disadvantage, particularly in rural and remote areas. In the Territory, these changes have been aggravated by the increasing prevalence of substance abuse, violence, sexual abuse, self-harm and youth homelessness, particularly in Indigenous communities. Combine these factors with the increasingly multi-ethnic and multilingual nature of our classrooms and the influence of new technologies and mass media on young people, and it is inevitable that a new approach to teaching is required for all students. Perhaps it is best to summarise these

challenges as Eyers *et al* (1992) did by focusing on the developmental tasks of young people rather than the characteristics of adolescence. The following list of tasks is based on an adaptation by Eyers *et al* (1992, p.9) of Hargreave, Havinghurst and Thornburg's lists, but has been extended to include the new challenges that confront young people as identified by Luke *et al* (2003), and further adapted to account for the Territory context.

The developmental tasks of young people

12. Young people need to
- adjust to a period of rapid physical change
- grow towards independence, while still needing a level of security that is increasingly, for many of them, not offered at home or in their community
- gain experience in decision making and in accepting responsibility, a particular issue for young Indigenous men and women and for a growing number of other students who are living independently of their parents
- develop self-confidence through achievement in significant events, with ceremony and business being a particular focus for Indigenous youth
- establish a sense of identity, including sexual identity, in a world where social values are less shaped by family and community and more influenced by peers and exposure to mass media
- gain social acceptance and affection from peers who come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- interact with and cope in an increasingly unstable and more complex political and social world
- establish relationships with particular adults who can act as role models, who for many young people may be their teachers in the absence of other suitable adults in their lives
- think in ways that are more abstract and reflective
- use an array of ICT technologies
- develop lifelong learning skills.

13. Educational research on the junior secondary or middle years has challenged the existing structural arrangements separating primary and secondary and identified a clear middle phase of schooling, particularly over Years 7, 8 and 9, when a focus on pastoral care and a more primary school (or less fragmented) approach to pedagogy, teacher contact and curriculum arrangements can lead to a better education for young adolescents (Australian Curriculum Studies 1998; Barrat 1998; Eyers *et al.*, 1992; Luke *et al.*, 2003). This middle years approach includes an integrated curriculum based on either core subjects or essential learnings taught by one or two teachers, plus a number of electives with specialist teachers. It replaces the more traditional transition to high school that is characterised by a sudden disjunction from a totally integrated primary curriculum

to the common secondary approach of six or seven separate subjects with as many different teachers. Pedagogies in the middle years should emphasise engagement in complex, higher order thinking, using problem-based learning on tasks that are embedded in a context where the purpose and relevance of learning are clear.

14.   The essential features of middle schooling programs are
   - smaller groups of students, arranged within learning communities or sub-schools
   - a smaller number of teachers for each student
   - interdisciplinary teaching teams
   - strong pastoral care programs
   - integrated curriculum for core subjects
   - self-directed, problem-based learning
   - higher order, critical thinking
   - individual needs catered for, particularly those of 'at risk' students
   - flexible use of time and space
   - seamless transition
   - a firmly stated commitment by the school, staff and the community to the principles and practices of middle schooling.

15.   Educators claim these structural, curriculum and pedagogical changes allow for more relevant learning and a smoother transition between the primary and secondary stages of schooling, offering students a more supportive environment where they can develop a closer relationship with one or two teachers. They point to the success of middle schooling in increasing a *sense of belonging* during the difficult transition process and in improving social and learning outcomes, but the evidence is largely qualitative and confined to specific learning sites.

16.   In their recent report on middle schooling Luke *et al.* (2003) stated
   There has been little attention to the systematic, large scale, longitudinal and methodologically rigorous research associated with the middle years.
Nevertheless, there is general consensus in the literature that middle schooling does offer opportunities for a more relevant curriculum and pedagogy, and the potential for improved learning outcomes for young people.

Middle schooling in the Northern Territory

17.   Several government and non-government schools in the Territory already have well-established middle years programs. A non-government school has a middle school approach for Years 7 to 9, with an integrated curriculum, teams of teachers and a strong focus on pastoral care. Year 10 is considered a preparation for the senior years and has

a strong vocational learning component. An urban school has developed an integrated curriculum with a strong pastoral care program for Years 8 and 9, as well as a transition program for Year 7 students in feeder primary schools.

18.　　The development of middle schooling for secondary students in other Territory schools has been in part a response to changing demographics and ethnic diversity, and in part to a desire to meet more effectively the social and learning needs of students. At a rural school, a substantial increase in Indigenous enrolments prompted teachers to reconsider their school organisation and teaching pedagogies. The school has grouped students according to both skills and interests, offering them an integrated curriculum with a strong literacy and numeracy focus as well as an intensive pastoral care program. In each of these three schools, teachers reported that since the introduction of a middle years approach, behaviour has improved, there is a high degree of engagement in learning, and some improvement in literacy and numeracy levels for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

19.　　The review heard accounts of and witnessed some very positive teaching and learning in schools. However, the evidence available is largely anecdotal and there is a need for a range of qualitative and quantitative data to be collected over time to support teacher and student enthusiasm for these programs. Secondary students involved in middle years programs spoke positively about their learning and there was a great deal of support for the introduction of middle schooling in both the submissions and consultations, reflected in comments such as

> *I like Year 7, 8 and 9 grouped together to form a middle school. However, it has to be a true middle school with an integrated curriculum that provides opportunities to cater for individual needs. [It] also needs to have a strong pastoral care focus, and limit the number of teachers that students have to contend with in these years.*

20.　　While there is no specific research on the effects of a middle school organisation for Indigenous students, the benefits in creating a supportive learning environment have led educators to consider such methods to be useful in providing a framework for teaching young Indigenous people (Chadbourne, 2001).

21.　　Given these responses, and the reported initial success of these programs in improving both well-being and engagement in programs in many schools across Australia, the review supports the introduction of middle schooling practices for young people in the later middle years. The paper submitted to the review by the Reference Group supports this view. However, the programs must focus on intellectual rigour and data must be gathered to assess learning outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy, as well as social outcomes so the programs can be monitored and evaluated.

22.   In response to the growing trend towards middle schooling across Australia and in the Territory, a Middle Years Team was established in Curriculum Services Branch in January 2003 to address the professional development needs of teachers of the middle years and to promote understandings about middle years strategies and structures and their relationship to the NTCF. The review considers that a policy and implementation strategy for middle schooling should be developed by DEET and that the Middle Years Team be responsible for its implementation in schools. The learning communities recommended in Chapter 3 are the ideal vehicles through which to test, trial and evaluate middle school pedagogies.

Who should be in the middle and senior years?

Social maturation

23.   There is no consistency across or within many of the states and systems in the years that constitute the middle years of schooling. While the broadest definition of the term middle years generally includes Years 5–10, middle school programs vary across Australia. Some middle schools start at Year 5, while others begin at Year 6 or 7. Similarly, there is a range of exit points with middle school programs finishing variously at Years 8, 9 and 10 (Chadbourne, 2001). Secondary schools in Australia are marked by a similar diversity of structures. Across the nation there are senior colleges for students in Years 10–12 and Years 11–12. Senior students are also in comprehensive schools from Years 8–12 and Years 7–12. In the Territory, we have two senior colleges catering for students in Years 11–12 and comprehensive schools for Years 8–12 and 7–12. A number of secondary schools and senior colleges in the Territory also have a Year 13 for an increasing number of students who choose to complete their NTCE over three years.

24.   The review team heard a range of views on these issues. Many teachers, students and parents believe that Year 7 should be grouped with Years 8 and 9, as students are physically and socially ready. One teacher commented, *kids are so grown up now at that age.* Other respondents maintained that Year 7 students are not ready to cope with high school, but these comments almost always referred to them being placed in traditional high school structures. In high schools with middle years programs there was strong support for the inclusion of Year 7. An executive teacher managing the program in one school pointed out

>   *It would be more effective if the Year 7 students were placed in the high school as it would allow for a better transition from primary to secondary and allow us to run a more effective middle school program…with a strong pastoral care focus.*

The AEU submission supported moving Year 7 into secondary schools stating

>   *The trials in Alice Springs of inclusion of Year 7 into the secondary schools should adequately demonstrate the effectiveness of inclusion of primary aged students into secondary schools*

but went on to say that *staffing and resources do need to be attached to this transition.* Other respondents suggested to the review that this would be best achieved if Year 7 teachers were also transferred with these students to allow for mutual professional development between primary and secondary school teachers.

25.   There were also differing views about where Year 10 should be placed, but the majority of respondents believed that socially these students are closer to the senior years. However there were many comments to the effect that these students need a strong support system throughout their senior years, particularly as they make the transition from school to work, further training or higher education. The review sees the middle years of schooling as two discrete but related stages: the 'early middle years', covering Years 5 and 6 where research has shown a distinct slow-down in student learning growth and there is evidence of some student dis-connection and dis-engagement with schooling; and the 'later middle years' from Years 7–9 where learning often stagnates or in some cases dips and the proportion of students who become disruptive in classes and alienated from school increases (Eyers *et al*, 1992; Hill *et al*, 1996). The 'senior years' should extend from Years 10 to 12 or 13, a time where young people want greater autonomy and opportunities to make decisions about their own learning and future pathways, but still need guidance and mentoring.

Transitions

26.   Many of the submissions and consultations pointed out that transitions are stressful, and can result in a loss of self-confidence, a lag or decrease in learning and students 'dropping out'. There was evidence in the submissions and consultations that Year 7 and Year 10 are crucial transition points where young people have to prepare for a new phase of learning. However, they are usually not grouped with students or teachers from that new phase so it is difficult for them to be adequately prepared. One submission said
> We need to look at transition from Year 7 to 8 – put Year 7 into high school, but use a primary delivery model

and another said
> Consider moving Year 10 to be with Years 11 and 12 and make it a transitional year.

27.   If Year 7 and Year 10 were each to be seen as the beginning of a new phase of learning rather than the culmination of the previous stage, students in these years would be placed with the next stage so they are prepared for it. This would facilitate a seamless transition. Wherever the transition points are placed, there will be issues for students about moving schools. These will include feelings of excitement and anxiety about the future, some disruption to learning patterns and procedures and a period of adjustment to the expectations and procedures of the new school. The review believes such issues can be addressed to a certain extent if there is strong liaison between schools to provide

appropriate activities and guidance, with extensive communication between students, parents and teachers about each school's vision, procedures and expectations. The issue of transitions is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Curriculum and pedagogy

28.   Young people should be grouped not only to meet their social and transitional needs but also according to their pedagogical and curriculum requirements. In the various stages of schooling, students have different learning expectations and there should be a different focus in both pedagogy and curriculum at each stage.

Early middle years

29.   In the early middle years (Years 5 and 6) both curriculum and pedagogy should be focused on consolidating literacy, numeracy and technacy to underpin knowledge and skills across other learning areas, so that students are prepared to meet the demands of secondary education. It is important to increase the range of adult contact, to help promote the adolescent task of learning to deal with adults in changing ways. The review team noted comments from teachers, young people and parents that increasing numbers of students enter secondary education without sufficient skills in literacy, numeracy and technacy to access the broader and more academic demands of the curriculum. This anecdotal evidence is borne out by the MAP testing data in Chapter 2. The review believes this is a serious issue that must be addressed if students are to have the opportunity of success in their secondary studies.

Later middle years

30.   Year 7 students should be offered an integrated curriculum covering outcomes from the core learning areas – English, Mathematics, Science and Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) as well as outcomes in the EsseNTial Learnings of the NTCF. It is essential that literacy, numeracy and technacy remain a focus of the integrated curriculum and all learning areas. Those not attaining Year 7 benchmarks in these skills ought to have the opportunity for remediation during the later middle years. This will require teachers who have specialist knowledge and expertise in developing basic literacy, numeracy and technacy skills.

31.   At Year 7, young people should also be given the opportunity to access the various strands of the eight key learning areas so they have a broad-based education with experiences in a range of learning pathways. This is supported by the structure of the NTCF, where at Band 4 (Year 7), students are expected to meet learning outcomes in a wider range of strands in four of the eight learning areas, that is Mathematics, SOSE, Technology and Design, and the Arts. These curriculum opportunities are more readily available in secondary schools where students can experience a range of subjects and

specialist learning with teachers who have specific subject expertise. A mathematics teacher in one high school told the review team

> *We have so many calls from primary teachers because they are unsure of what to do*

and a senior curriculum officer said

> *Some primary teachers are leaving the algebra strand until the kids move into high school because they haven't got the confidence or the skills to deal with it.*

32.   In Years 8 and 9 students should be given opportunities to investigate these subjects and learning pathways in more depth or explore new ones. Vocational and livelihoods learning and opportunities for work experience are essential in the later middle years (Years 7– 9) and we have already recommended that the enterprise strand of the NTCF be re-worked to reflect the importance of these. It is vital that students have opportunities for vocational and livelihoods learning across all learning areas and schools should provide access to facilities and teachers so they can offer curricula that will allow for this learning to happen.

33.   Literacy, numeracy and technacy should continue to be a focus of the integrated curriculum for core subjects in Years 8 and 9 and in the other learning areas. By the end of Year 9 students, parents and teachers must have a clear understanding of their levels in literacy, numeracy and technacy as this knowledge is essential for choosing appropriate learning and career pathways in Year 10.

34.   There are also pedagogical reasons for placing Year 7 students in the later middle years. The NTCF requires students at Band 4 and 5 levels (Years 7–9) to explore not only more complex concepts and resource materials but also to assess, examine, analyse, synthesise, apply and evaluate their learning. While traditional classroom structures and strategies using textbooks and 'chalk and talk' have served the needs of the more able in meeting outcomes that involve higher order thinking, many other students have been unable to achieve these levels. Middle school pedagogies based on an integrated curriculum, using a problem-based approach allow this higher-order thinking to be applied to real life problems or issues using practical or 'hands-on' activities.

35.   A recent review of middle years programs in a range of schools across Australia highlighted the need for more intellectually demanding pedagogies, which develop higher order thinking and critical literacy (Luke *et al.,* 2003). Students who completed a middle years program in a Territory school confirmed the possible limitations of middle school pedagogies. They valued the positive relationships they developed with a small group of teachers but were concerned that they did not learn sufficient skills for senior study. One senior school student commented, *middle schooling was a good bridge but we did a lot of time filling activities, which didn't really prepare us for Years 10, 11 and 12*. The review

believes that later middle years pedagogies must have intellectual rigour so that students realise their potential as learners and are prepared for the senior years. This intellectual quality is often dependent on the involvement of teachers with specific subject expertise in both the design and the delivery of the program (Luke *et al.,* 2003).

Senior years

36.   The review believes that Year 10 is a critical transition point between the later middle years and the senior years, as students move from general education into more specialised learning. At this level, students begin to make crucial choices about possible career pathways and prepare for future learning so they need access to even more diverse yet specialised curriculum offerings. They will choose English and Mathematics and other specialist classes from the range of learning areas, according to their ability levels and career aspirations. In addition, access is required to a range of VET subjects and work experience opportunities so they can explore possible career pathways in greater depth.

37.   In Territory schools, a number of Year 10 students are already choosing VET courses or School Based Apprenticeships but these opportunities are not available to all. If Year 10 is formally recognised as part of the senior years, all students will have greater access to a wider range of curriculum offerings. Additionally, teachers of both junior and senior secondary students told the review that Year 10 should be grouped with the senior years so teachers can prepare students sufficiently for senior school learning. A teacher commented

> *the gap between Year 10 and 11 is very big, especially if you have come from a junior secondary school which has lost sight of what Year 11 requires.*

Students who need extra preparation for senior courses should have the opportunity to strengthen their skills before embarking on a particular learning or career pathway.

38.   Increasingly, Year 10 students are taking Stage 1 (Year 11) subjects, and some teachers saw this as an excellent opportunity for students to accelerate or broaden their learning. On the other hand, care needs to be taken in doing this, as not all young people are ready for acceleration, as one school found

> *Some students are even doing Year 11 subjects in Year 9. In one of our Year 11 classes only four students hadn't done Year 11 in Year 10 … but there were enormous gaps in their knowledge and skills. Our school is very aware of irregularities in performance levels when kids are accelerated through some subjects while other foundation work that they should be doing is missed.*

In essence, there need to be closer links between Years 10 and 11, with Year 10 being very much a year of preparation for the senior years, or for transition to work and livelihood. The review believes this is best achieved by placing Year 10 with the senior years.

39.   Years 11, 12 and 13 are years of increasing differentiation and specialisation as students follow more specific career pathways. Nevertheless, many still choose more general broad-based courses until they settle on a particular pathway or career direction. Regardless, all students need a diversity of curriculum offerings, and clustering students in the senior years allows schools to offer a more extensive array of courses relevant to a range of vocations and livelihoods. Schools need to promote the full range of senior courses, not just the traditional subject disciplines, but also Community Studies, Integrated Studies and Extension Studies, which give students opportunities to design, sequence and pace their own learning.

40.   Students should also have opportunities to study and gain credit for a range of short courses as well as TAFE and higher education subjects, particularly those who are doing Stage 2 (Year 12) over two years and would like to make a start on higher education or further training while completing their NTCE. This is already happening in a number of institutions but there needs to be more concerted work on negotiating credit transfer and course articulation between schools, TAFE and higher education institutions.

41.   The choice of pedagogies in the senior years can vary enormously too, from 'hands on' approaches with opportunities to apply skills and knowledge in the workplace and the wider community, to complex, abstract learning, preparing students for higher education. However it is important that even in the more academic subjects, students are given opportunities to reflect on patterns and connections in their learning and to create personal learning pathways based on preferred learning styles and interests. The incorporation of Essential Learnings (South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, 2003) into the SSABSA Curriculum Statements requires new pedagogies for those in the senior years of schooling. The understandings and capabilities embedded in the SASCA Essential Learnings are not knowledge-based but a generic range of skills, which will prepare for the many possibilities and uncertainties in employment, recreation and community activities young people will encounter once they leave school.

A framework for the stages of schooling

42.   The review has developed the following framework for the stages of schooling that seeks to account for the distinctive social, curricular and pedagogical needs of students at the various stages of schooling. It also recognises that these stages are part of a learning continuum that commences at birth and continues into adulthood and old age. Schools are no longer only preparing students for a particular occupation or vocation. They are developing them as lifelong learners so they can

productively engage with changing times as thoughtful, active, responsive and committed local, national and global citizens.

(South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability, 2003)

A Framework for the Stages of Schooling

Students	Stage of Schooling	Pedagogies*	Curriculum
Young children	**Early Years** Years T – 4 Growth, engagement and exploration	Allow for experiential learning and growth through immersion in a range of experiences Introduce lifelong learning skills through awareness of self and others as learners	**NTCF** EsseNTial Learnings Strong focus on literacy, numeracy and technacy Integrated curriculum for learning areas
Older children	**Early Middle Years** Years 5 – 6 Development and consolidation	Encourage investigative learning based around practical experiences, excursions and real life problems Develop lifelong learning skills through self-directed and collaborative learning	**NTCF** EsseNTial Learnings Focus on literacy, numeracy and technacy Integrated curriculum for core areas Cross Curricula Perspectives Specialist Art, Music, PE and LOTE
Adolescents	**Later Middle Years** Year 7 Foundation and experimentation Years 8 and 9 Consolidation, enrichment and extension	Cultivate higher order thinking, deep knowledge and understanding through problem-based applied learning Consolidate lifelong learning skills through meta-learning skills, where students plan, sequence and question their learning	**NTCF** EsseNTial Learnings Integrated curriculum for core areas Literacy, numeracy and technacy remediation/extension Vocational learning Opportunities to experience and investigate in more depth specialist classes across various learning areas
Emerging adults and adults	**Senior Years** Year 10 Preparation and pathways Years 11, 12 & 13 Specialisation and differentiation	Promote higher order thinking through abstract and/or applied learning Encourage problem-based cross curricula and/or extended learning Foster extension of lifelong learning skills, where students understand, critically analyse and reflect on patterns and connections in learning to create preferred learning pathways and futures	**NTCF** Specialist classes for key learning areas Literacy, numeracy and technacy remediation VET/vocational learning School Based Apprenticeships EsseNTial Learnings **South Australian Curriculum Statements** SACSA Essential Learnings Specialist subject areas Cross disciplinary subjects Writing-Based Literacy Assessment VET/School-Based Apprenticeships University/TAFE courses

*All teaching pedagogies should be underpinned by approaches in which teachers acknowledge prior learning, account for a range of learning styles and individual needs, connect learning to student experiences and strive for intellectual rigour in a supportive learning environment based on mutual respect.

43.   The terms 'primary' and 'secondary' are becoming less and less relevant as learners take a more complex and varied journey through their education. Children in early childhood and upper primary are often placed in family groups across two or three year levels, children in Year 7 do Year 8 work, in Year 10 take Year 11 subjects, and Years 11

and 12 are now treated as if they were a coordinated whole, with more students taking three years to complete their NTCE. Increasingly, too, learners are combining work, extra-curricular and family obligations with school, dropping out and coming back later, and a wide range of other permutations.

44.   Eventually, students might no longer be classified in years or grades. Instead they might be considered to be part of the 'early middle', 'later middle' or 'senior' stages of schooling. They should progress through the various stages at different rates and transitions might occur at any age. This should prevent young people and their parents mistakenly believing that they are secondary students, when they may really still be achieving in the early middle years stage. The kinds of pedagogy and curriculum materials chosen should depend on the social age and learning stage of students, but there should be no doubt of their educational level, because their outcomes in literacy, numeracy and technacy will be measured against established benchmarks. This is not just MAP testing, but the rich data and range of assessments that will be provided through the Learning Profiles.

45.   Many parents who spoke to the review were concerned about automatic promotion through the grades, believing their children need to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills before advancing to the next stage. Parents offered comments such as
> *I would like to see children taught at their level, not pushed through school when they are not able to do their work. [There's] too much emphasis on age.*

The material collected for the Learning Profiles will allow teachers to diagnose each student's levels of achievement and provide for remediation at crucial transition phases and in foundation years such as Year 7 and Year 10. The review believes that our current educational frameworks cannot just be tinkered with – they need major change, and these changes need to acknowledge that the time spent at any particular stage of schooling will vary from student to student and from one context to another.

Pathways

46.   Today's young people are confronted with a complex array of future pathways and some have interrupted journeys through school, particularly in the senior years. Secondary students who spoke to the review were often unsure of their futures and agreed they needed more career advice and guidance. Students in all urban and regional high schools in the Territory have access to career advice but students in remote areas do not enjoy the same level of service. For example, although a successful Careers Expo was organised at one remote community, this was a 'one-off' activity which relied on a special submission for funding and the commitment and energy of a classroom teacher to organise. This inequity must be addressed and will be taken up in Chapter 6.

47.   In the remote regions of the Territory, the need to align education with explicit pathways for community development, participation and future livelihoods has been highlighted in many of the consultations undertaken. Many respondents were concerned about the lack of employment pathways for students in remote areas and the effect this has on Indigenous young people's attitude to work. One Indigenous community leader commented

> *So few Indigenous people work that kids have no concept of what it means to be a worker. They get a job for a few weeks then leave. They need mentors when they go into the workplace as they often feel isolated and don't stay.*

Often local employment and training opportunities are not being used for the benefit of young people. A principal in a remote community pointed out

> *Currently there is a $2 million building program going on in the community but not one local employed …. We need to attach these building programs to opportunities for training and employment for Indigenous students.*

Such issues need to be addressed with a community approach to education and training and this is taken up in Chapter 6.

48.   These pathways are critical in urban and major regional centres too. A significant shift in current teaching and learning practices is required, as well as the formation of partnerships with individuals, organisations and enterprises in the community.

49.   Many non-Indigenous students and their parents or caregivers still believe the only destination for their educational journey is higher education. They need to consider other destinations such as TAFE, traineeships, apprenticeships, enterprise education, positive community participation or leadership as well as paid or voluntary work. On the other hand, at present very few Indigenous students aspire to university study. There are many reasons for this. Many have such limited literacy and numeracy skills they are unable to cope with the level of learning in the secondary years required for entry to university. Even some of those who have the skills believe that Western learning is too hard and beyond them, while others are scared they will lose their culture if they succeed in Western education. Moreover, the lack of formal careers education for these young people means that even those with the required knowledge and expertise are unaware of the range of higher education pathways and special entry schemes available for Indigenous students.

50.   Students should be able to leave the educational train at earlier points if they are not succeeding, become disenchanted, or cannot cope with the demands of study. They may choose a different pathway for a period, perhaps entering the workforce, travelling, or assuming community or family responsibilities. Even so, they should be able to continue their educational journey when they are ready.

51.   Schools need to be more flexible in their attitudes towards the range of student pathways. A young person reported to the review he wanted to take a year off school *to earn some money* before returning to complete his secondary studies. He was also aware that the skills gained as part of the on-the-job training could be credited towards his NTCE. However, his teachers tried to convince him to stay at school. Similarly, schools are not always well equipped to deal with those students who are re-entering education and a number reported they returned to study, but dropped out again because of a lack of the necessary school support. Young people have constructed many new routes from school into and out of work, further training and higher education, and schools must take some responsibility for students during the transition period. As one educator noted, *Kids reach the end of school and the support stops.*

Tracking

52.   Once Years 9 and 10 are reached, there should be a rich repository of information on individual Learning Profiles (see Chapter 3) to assist the students, teachers and parents make informed decisions about possible pathways. Schools also need a systematic way of guiding young people through their senior years, so they develop and maintain some sense of direction and do not stay on the education train oblivious to the range of possible destinations. While some schools and colleges offer various forms of assistance in choosing pathways and subjects to senior students, the current systems are not always formalised or consistent and no central tracking records of pathways or final destinations are kept. Other states are beginning to or have developed a range of formal tracking and support systems to guide students through and beyond their senior years of school. These include individual career or learning maps, specialist advice and targeted programs.

53.   The review considers that every young person should be allocated a 'pathways mentor' to monitor their learning and assist them in selecting appropriate career pathways, seeking specific career advice and choosing relevant courses. Teachers could assume the role of a pathways mentor, but would not be expected to offer specific career advice. They would be referred to career advisers for information on requirements for entry into particular occupations, TAFE or university courses.

54.   Many senior school teachers already fulfil this role. It is important that support is multi-faceted, involving not only school resources but also other agencies that assist young people in making their transition from school. Schools should be encouraged to use para-professionals, who can establish and maintain close connections with a range of outside agencies, although career advisers and teachers will have an important role to play. This support should be offered to all senior students at least once a semester.

55.   Before leaving school, young people should work with their pathways mentor to develop a Futures Portfolio that records their achievements not only in school but also in the workplace and the community. The Futures Portfolio should provide a specific plan for their future pathway, whether it is employment, apprenticeship, further training, higher education, community participation or some combination of these. The plan should include information about the range of services that can assist their transition from school to work or further training.

56.   Students should be followed up for up to a year after completion of school to track their destination and to offer extra support if necessary. An assistant principal from a senior college maintained

> *Tracking should extend beyond the exit points to ensure students actually do take up that job or apprenticeship they left school for, or that the higher education course was the right one for them. Schools need to know what happens to their students not only to assist the individual through the transition period but also to use this data as a basis for future decision-making about curriculum offerings and student support.*

A participant at a recent Central Land Council education forum highlighted the need for extra support for Indigenous students during the transition from school to further study. She commented

> *Aboriginal people have very few choices when it comes to education. What is there for them after education, back in the communities? If there is nothing for them to do, they start on alcohol or drugs. There is no support to send them off to college. Why aren't they going for further education after secondary, why aren't they continuing to college if they do get through secondary?*

Compulsion

57.   While there is a trend in other states and countries, for example, Queensland and the United Kingdom, to raise the compulsory leaving age in order to keep young people at school, the review is not convinced that such action would be appropriate or have any effect in the Territory. Having a compulsory leaving age of 15 has not deterred many young people from dropping out earlier and it is almost universally recognised that the current sanctions do not work. However, the review is firmly of the opinion that young people should stay at school until they have the skills and understandings to equip them for their chosen career or learning pathways. Moreover, students should not leave school until they have organised their Futures Portfolio with assistance from their pathways mentor, to prepare them for their transition from school into further training or the workforce. The compulsory age of schooling will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 13.

School organisation and structures

58.   If secondary schools are to provide the types of pedagogy and curriculum required at the various stages of learning, they will have to be rather different organisations from those we currently have in the Territory. Schools catering for the later middle years need a more flexible timetable structure and new learning spaces to allow for team teaching, withdrawal programs, small group activities and individual tuition. A regional high school visited by the review team has re-organised its timetable into blocks and knocked out walls to allow for the pedagogical and curriculum changes needed to be able to offer an appropriate program for the later middle years. The program appears to be having significant success in engaging students.

59.   Schools catering for young people in the senior years will also need to consider some changes to their timetable and learning spaces to allow for the diversity of learning situations. Increasingly, student learning and assessment occur away from the school, in workplaces and the wider community, at TAFE institutions and universities, on excursions and fieldwork trips, and at home using ICT. The existing senior colleges have catered for some of these options with their timetables, but as yet there has been little re-organisation of school learning spaces to cater for different pedagogical approaches such as self-directed learning, problem-based learning, lectures, seminars, tutorials, online learning and team teaching for cross-disciplinary learning. The review team is aware of senior colleges in other states, for example Bendigo Senior College, that have undertaken structural and organisational changes that are allowing for much more diversity in teaching and learning approaches.

60.   Schools may also need to consider changes to the structure of the school year and school day to meet the needs of young people. Many Indigenous people who spoke to the review team asked if there could be more flexibility in the structure of the school year, particularly in remote areas where for cultural reasons young people and their parents would like a long holiday break in the Dry Season and to be in school during the Wet Season months. Some schools have already made these arrangements. A number of parents would like the whole school year to be used more productively. Many Year 10 and 11 students have several weeks at the end of each school year where they leave school early. This time could be used to prepare for learning in the next year, to catch up on skills missed, to organise the Futures Portfolio or for review meetings with the pathways mentor.

61.   Schools also should be able to be more flexible about the structure of the school day. Many young people would like school to start later, and to operate in the late afternoon or early evening to better suit their lifestyle.

62.   While the review has set out two clear stages of secondary schooling, the later middle years and the senior years, our emphasis is on improving education for young adolescents and young adults, not simply on re-structuring schools. The effectiveness of later middle and senior schooling does not hinge on structural and organisational changes alone. Strong leadership and staff with a shared vision and commitment, as well as the associated pedagogical and curricular changes are crucial factors too. However structural and organisational changes can provide the platform for the development of successful programs in the later middle and senior years. Recent research into middle schooling does suggest middle schools that operate in a comprehensive system are almost always dominated by the senior school agenda (Luke *et al.*, 2003) and this was a common complaint in comprehensive schools in the Territory.

63.   As a consequence, the review believes that, whether learning precincts (see Chapter 6) decide either to create separate later middle years and senior years institutions with formal links between them, or to retain comprehensive schools, the important thing is that they move towards offering the curriculum and pedagogy to support the stages of schooling outlined in this report. Within a comprehensive school they might create separate viable sub-schools with separate staffing and school organisation to cater for the needs of each group. However, within a precinct, schools for the later middle years and senior years should not be completely independent. Rather, they should be connected under the umbrella of a single management structure to enable the continuity and consistency of pedagogy, curriculum and mentoring for students that the review considers to be essential for their learning growth and success in secondary education. Regardless of the structure, there must be strong links between the separate schools or sub-schools to achieve a seamless transition for students as they move between stages.

The essential teaching skills

64.   Teachers for the later middle and senior years will require a greater range of skills than consistently is the case in current class/ teacher arrangements. If the needs of students in the stages of schooling are to be met, later middle years teachers will have to be able to work across at least two curriculum areas and to integrate curriculum in ways familiar to students from primary school. They will have to plan collaboratively and team-teach across discipline areas within year levels, while still maintaining the specialist knowledge required to achieve the requisite intellectual rigour which is sometimes lacking in middle schools pedagogy and curricula (Luke *et al.*, 2003). At least for the next five to ten years the NT will have to employ or train all existing teachers to have greater expertise in and responsibility for the consolidation and remediation of literacy, numeracy and technacy learning, no matter what the specialist subject areas of the teacher may be. They will have to work as a team with other professionals and para-professionals more

than they do now, and to manage that interaction in new ways to facilitate learning. As young people move through Years 7 to 9, their teachers will require a more relational, guiding role, as opposed to a purely instructional one.

65.   Teachers of the senior years must be specialists in discipline areas. They will work together across year levels, particularly Years 10 and 11, to help young people plan appropriate study choices, and to provide a good foundation of achievement for their next step. They will have to organise and facilitate learning with other professionals and para-professionals, both from within and outside the school. They will need to become much more cognisant of different learning and career pathways available to young people, both within their disciplines and across related disciplines, and guide their students to be familiar with available options. To do all this, teachers will have closer contact with bodies outside the school, and know what is happening in industry and tertiary education. They will act more as a facilitator and mentor to young people, guiding them through self-directed and problem-based learning and working with them as young adults to design their own futures.

66.   These changes may affect teacher workloads, but some schools have already coped with this by negotiating time for shared preparation, and have noted that improvements in behaviour and the consequent reduction in time spent in behaviour management in the classroom has been a welcome trade-off. Another concern expressed by teachers about middle schooling proposals is that they could 'get stuck' in the one area, senior or middle school, and that this would affect their career pathway. Later recommendations in this report about learning precincts are designed, amongst other things, to allow for teachers to move between the two stages of schooling. It is understood that later middle years teachers may have aspirations to also teach senior students, which would then require specific further training or professional development in appropriate pedagogy and content. The same applies to teachers of the senior years who may wish to teach in the middle school, or develop career pathways to teaching in higher education. In general, teachers should be primarily trained (during pre-service training or through professional development programs) for one of the stages, but should also have an understanding of the needs and processes evident in the adjacent stages. The issue of training and professional development is addressed in Chapter 9, where it is recommended that the roles of teachers be re-defined to support the responsibilities they will have as a consequence of the changes to the stages of schooling proposed in this report.

67.   The review believes that to improve the quality of teaching and learning, schooling must provide the appropriate frameworks and structures to cater for the different pedagogical, curricular and social needs of students in the various stages of their development. This requires a restructuring of the current stages of schooling to meet the

particular needs of students in the 'early', 'early middle', 'later middle' and 'senior' years. At the same time, the review recognises that school is one phase in a continuum of lifelong learning, so what is done at each stage must be viewed as part of a young person's ongoing development. This means there has to be a seamless transition through the stages of schooling, where the learning at each phase builds on previous understandings and skills and prepares for the next stage. The later middle years need reform to assist young people in meeting the developmental challenges they face. The senior years are a time of preparing young people for learning, work and community participation beyond formal schooling. They must be assisted and monitored in these years as they choose appropriate learning and career pathways. Changes to the organisational and physical structures of schools will be necessary if the new stages are to be accommodated. There will also need to be changes to the pre service training and professional development of teachers to meet the social, curricular and pedagogical requirements of young people at each stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stages of Schooling

It is recommended that

10. the NT Government approve the new Framework for the Stages of Schooling for adoption in Northern Territory schools, and that
    - 2004-2005 be designated planning time for implementation of these new stages, with a view to commencing the movement of Year 7 students to high school where this is not already the case in 2006
    - the movement of Year 10s to senior schools occur within a compatible timeframe
    - in 2004-05 the NT Board of Studies, in consultation with SSABSA, advise on any implications of the changed stages for curriculum and assessment.
11. to meet the pedagogical, curricular and social needs of students in the later middle and senior years, NT DEET
    - develop a policy and strategy for the Territory-wide implementation of curriculum and pedagogy for the later middle and senior years as outlined in the framework for the Stages of Schooling, with the Middle Years and Senior Years Teams in DEET being responsible for facilitating its implementation in schools
    - assist Learning Precincts to determine the mix of school organisation and structures best suited to meet the needs of their students, within the context of the new stages of schooling proposed in this report.

12. to monitor and support student learning and career pathways in the senior years and students' transition from school to employment, further training or higher education, NT DEET

- require that schools and Learning Precincts provide pathways mentorship to each student in the senior years and for up to one year after completion, to advise on and manage student progress through their chosen learning and career pathways

- provide funding as part of the Precinct Establishment Grant or through separate funding to schools and precincts, for training of current staff, and for para-professional support to ensure that each precinct is able to meet its responsibilities to provide pathways mentoring to all senior students

- require that a Futures Portfolio be developed by each student with assistance from the pathways mentor, to record their achievements and provide a specific plan for their future pathway

- require that the Learning Profile be extended at Year 10 to record student career and learning pathways during their senior years

- require schools to collect destination data one year after students have completed their schooling, and this data be provided to DEET for system-level decision making and reporting.

CHAPTER 6
LEARNING PRECINCTS

> Schools produce the best range of future options for young people by working together as a team with other schools and providers, vocational education institutions and universities, and employers and enterprises.
>
> The total range of young people's needs is best met by an educational delivery dedicated to providing a full range of services, including counselling, extra-curricular activities, emotional support, health and livelihood advice, through an 'integrated services' approach.
>
> The best outcomes for young people are achieved when education providers determine their own structure, organisation, and pedagogy to meet the needs of the young people they serve, within a framework established by the Government.
>
> Learning Precincts are places where people learn: the young people as students, and older people as parents, teachers and members of the community.

1.   This chapter is concerned with the ways in which the organisation of educational provision, at the level of the schools and their communities, can be structured to meet the changing needs of young people in the Territory. It details some of the current concerns about how best to meet young people's needs, how to arrive at a more equitable distribution of resources, and how to establish an effective devolution of decision making to the local level. The recent initiatives that are leading to a 'whole-of-government' or integrated services approach are also discussed in terms of their relevance to providing a better service to young people.

2.   The structures we are proposing in this chapter, that is, Learning Precincts, are designed to provide what we believe will be the most effective environment in which those recommended changes can take place. Particular issues for open access providers are also addressed.

Key themes

3.   Many secondary schools in the Northern Territory have worked with a high degree of commitment and expertise to deliver an educational service to meet the diverse and changing needs of young people. Given their current structures and organisation schools have been as flexible as possible in their approach to secondary education. They have extended the range and type of subject choices that are offered both within the school and at other locations, have taken advantage of system-wide programs such as VET,

TRY and School Based Apprenticeships to supplement their curriculum offerings, and some have expanded the range of welfare services they offer for students. Despite these initiatives, the ever-changing and increasingly complex demands of today's secondary students – especially in the NT context – have stretched the human and physical resources of many schools so that they are not able to meet the educational and the social and emotional needs of their students as well as is now necessary.

4.   Issues of equity in the provision of secondary education arose in urban, regional and remote schools across the Territory. While in many remote areas there was no secondary education provision at all, it was evident from the review process that schools in regional areas have also been disadvantaged because of the relatively small size of their student populations and their isolation. Even in urban areas there was some considerable difference in the quality of educational provision offered in each secondary school because of differences in their size and the diversity of their student populations. The critical issue underlying much of this inequity is the lack of, or unequal distribution of human and physical resources. While the review acknowledges that there is a finite level of resources that will be available for education, the more effective distribution and sharing of existing resources, including sharing across other providers and organisations, agencies or services outside the school system, supplemented by some judicious allocation of extra funds, would greatly enhance the quality of secondary education for all young people across the Territory.

5.   Many consultations and submissions highlighted the importance of involving the local community in the education process and in decision making. The diverse cultures and geographical dispersion in the Northern Territory led us to conclude that key decisions about young people's schooling must be made as close as possible to the students, with stronger application of local knowledge and input to those decisions than has been the case in the past. While there needs to be a greater degree of self-governance at the local level, it should operate within an accountability framework determined for the Territory as a whole.

6.   A recurring theme in many of the consultations and submissions was that
We need fundamental change to schools, as the current structures and systems are not working.
The review has considered various options and believes that the best organisational solution to these issues is to bring schools together into groupings we are calling Learning Precincts, across the Territory.

7.   Learning Precincts, as conceived by the review, are designed to meet the diversity and complexity of the educational, social and emotional needs of young people; and to

allow for the best use of both physical and human resources, while offering opportunities for greater local governance and community involvement in education. They offer the opportunity for schools to harness all the available resources in their locality to develop creative and innovative solutions to meet the educational needs of young people. As one secondary school principal said

> *There should be groupings of schools... Schools should work more cooperatively rather than competitively.*

The concept of a Learning Precinct

8.   When considering new models, the review examined various options that have been developed locally and interstate. Those considered and discarded included consolidating more schools into comprehensive Years 7-12 high schools, separating schools into Years 7–9 and 10–12 to better reflect our stages of schooling, establishing a formal middle school structure of Years 5–10, closing schools, or making all schools individually self-managing so that each one could decide for itself. We also considered a variety of other proposals that were intended to solve specific issues in particular locales, such as establishing a selective high school or other specialist schools. We decided against these, as such models only meet the needs of some groups of students, they would not assist with the issues associated with student transitions (see Chapter 5), and they would not address resourcing issues. Further, the NT student population is too small to sustain selective or specialist schools. After a great deal of consideration, the review team agreed that the most flexible solution for the variety of issues that face education here is to bring schools and their communities together to develop Learning Precincts across the Territory.

9.   We are defining a Learning Precinct as a set of schools working in partnership under one governance structure, led by one Head of Precinct, with a special relationship with its collective community. These schools may be affiliated by geography, or by Indigenous language or cultural groupings, and/or by emerging or historical relatedness. A precinct will have one jointly-developed strategic plan and a negotiated business plan. Learning precincts will be developed through a set of clearly defined stages that are outlined in Chapter 7, designed to move them towards increasing self-governance and management at the local level. This will enable a fluid set of responses to a changing variety of needs.

10.   A learning precinct will include all education providers funded by DEET who are in that grouping, such as schools, both primary and secondary, and training and community education centres. A learning precinct will have structured partnership agreements with higher education and VET providers, with other education providers, with business, enterprises and other organisations, and with local, NT and Commonwealth government

services and agencies within its orbit. The educators in that precinct will be expected to work in cooperation with these groups to provide an integrated services approach to best meet the needs of young people. The purpose of these partnerships is to bring together all available resources to improve learning outcomes for all students. Non-government schools will be encouraged to negotiate participation through Memoranda of Agreement, or even to become full members of precincts if all parties are agreeable.

11.   Moreover, in the model we propose, each school in the learning precinct is linked to every other one, so that there is the opportunity to offer students a seamless transition through the various phases of their learning. Given the size and dispersion of schools in the Territory, and the emphasis of this review on achieving a smooth transition for all students across the whole of their education, it has been necessary to extend the scope of our brief. While primary and tertiary education were not specifically part of our terms of reference, it has not been possible to devise solutions to address the crucial issues in secondary education without some consideration of the roles and relationships between all sectors. For the reasons we have detailed in the preceding sections of this chapter, we believe learning precincts must include primary and secondary education delivery, and in some locations higher education institutions and VET providers, as well as partnerships with other government agencies and community organisations that provide services for young people.

12.   Learning precinct formation is an incorporation of separate entities, not a merger or takeover. However, it is expected that there will need to be some rationalisation and re-allocation of resources within a precinct to allow for better teaching and learning for students. Where there is unnecessary duplication of teaching resources, decisions will have to be made about rationalising those resources so that all school programs are both high quality and cost effective. In our view, learning precincts will allow for more equitable and efficient use of all available resources.

13.   Nor is precinct formation a way of making all schools or learning sites homogeneous, even though they will work with one strategic plan and under one Head of Precinct. It is important that individual schools within a learning precinct are encouraged and assisted to maintain the strengths and special character that enable them to meet the particular needs of their local communities, and that students and parents can continue to identify with specific educational locales. The critical point is that they will be required to collaborate and cooperate, to work together towards common goals that have been mutually negotiated.

14.   It is envisaged that each learning precinct will be led and managed by a Head of Precinct (HoP) who would plan and have the authority for all aspects of the 'business of

education' in that precinct and would lead and manage school principals, including primary school principals. In general outline, the respective roles of the Head of Precinct, and of the principals of schools within it, will be defined by their prime focus. The HoP will be the Chief Executive Officer of the precinct, with a brief to act as the coordinator and facilitator of the operations of the precinct as a whole. The HoP will liaise with and report to DEET and will have a focus on all schools in the learning precinct. In addition, they will work with DEET and other HOPs to implement programs, address concerns and coordinate initiatives within the NT system as a whole. The principals will have a school based focus, bringing new ideas, policies and concerns to the school from the coordinated learning precinct level, and from within their schools to the precinct as a whole. Their main responsibility will remain the local operation of the school, interpreting its vision and needs to the precinct, and the precinct's shared vision and resources to it. Principals will report to the HoP.

15. A similar collaborative leadership and management model introduced eight years ago at Eastern Fleurieu in South Australia is operating successfully across seven campuses covering Reception to Year 12, and has resulted in improved educational outcomes for the 1 200 students attending them. The current Group Schools in the NT are operating successfully with similar leadership and management arrangements.

Meeting Young People's Needs

Curriculum and pedagogy

16. To improve the quality of education for young people, the review has set out two clear stages of secondary schooling, the later middle years (Years 7–9) and senior years (Years 10–12). In the particular stages of schooling, young people have different educational needs and in Chapter 5 we have suggested that there should be a different focus in both pedagogy and curriculum at each stage. While currently it is possible for separate junior and senior secondary schools to exist within the one traditional comprehensive school structure, often the demands of the senior school curriculum and staffing take precedence over the specific needs of the junior secondary students. The AEU NT submission noted that

> *the reintroduction of comprehensive high schools (particularly in the northern suburbs of Darwin) led to some schools not having the student population to sustain some courses or if they were sustained it was at the expense of large class numbers in the junior section of the school, while some classes in the senior school had very small numbers.*

This concern was also expressed in a number of submissions and consultations. It was not uncommon to hear comments like

It's generally agreed that the junior school is subsidising the senior school. We are trapped, because if you don't offer a range of senior courses the kids don't stay, but then you get huge class sizes in the junior school. This puts incredible pressure on staff, and increases the incidence of learning and behaviour problems with students.

17.   As explained in the previous chapter, students in the later middle years need the opportunity to explore or investigate in more depth a range of specialist subjects in the various strands of the learning areas in the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF). However, under current structures the range of subject choices is determined by the number at the school wishing to do the subject, and the availability of teachers and facilities within the school. Many students in the later middle years told the review they have to select subjects in which they have limited ability or interest, because the range of subjects is not available or because of timetable constraints. This is hardly conducive to educational success. As one teacher observed, *we keep putting square pegs in round holes and wondering why they don't fit.* Frequently, students told the review that subjects called 'electives' or 'options' were in fact compulsory, and often they were forced to study that 'elective' for one or two years. In most remote schools, there are few options or electives at all.

18.   The variations in the range and choice of subjects between secondary schools are more pronounced in the senior years of schooling where small comprehensive schools are struggling to provide a range of subject choices sufficient to meet all needs and interests. The range of subjects offered in Stage 2 varied enormously across the Territory, with one regional high school offering 10 subjects and another offering more than 60. As a result, some students in the smaller comprehensive high schools told the review they are forced to choose subjects which are not related to their specific career or learning pathway, or which are not appropriate to their ability level. In remote schools, the choice is even more limited, if there is any choice at all.

19.   In every school consultation regardless of location, but particularly in remote areas, teachers, students and parents spoke of the need for enhanced access and opportunity to participate in enterprise and vocational education programs, and to study VET courses. The existing provision in terms of choice and availability varies widely across the NT, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 10. For example, in Darwin many of the VET in Schools programs are conducted on a particular day. This means those students are only able to pursue one such course. Additionally, a number of schools have not re-structured their timetables to account for this, and many miss other subjects that are timetabled on the same day as the VET course. Students told the review team that they found it difficult to catch up missed work, while others who had not chosen VET subjects were frustrated when teachers delayed new learning because others were away at those courses.

20.   This is a major concern, when the breadth of choice is of paramount importance in the senior years, as young people need opportunities for diversification and specialisation. A recent report on Patterns of Participation in Year 12 (ACER, 2003) concluded that the subjects that students select for study in their senior years have a significant influence on their educational and career options on completion of school. Moreover, patterns of participation rates amongst students in their final year of secondary school are affected by *the opportunities provided through the curriculum structures in schools and across school systems that determine what is possible* (ACER, 2003, p.57).

21.   Schools are making efforts to enhance the range of available subject choices by enrolling students at the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC). In 2002, according to its annual report, NTOEC enrolled 320 students from other secondary schools in the Northern Territory and some from South Australia, and 406 students from remote Indigenous communities. While it is understandable that senior students in small regional and remote communities may have to rely on at least some distance education to meet their educational needs, it is of significant concern that for some students enrolled in high schools in the urban areas the only option available if they wish to undertake some key senior secondary subjects is to complete them via distance education. One student summed up the level of frustration with such arrangements

> *I took Physics because I was told we'd get a teacher but the class was too small and it didn't happen. It's hard to get help from our physics teacher at NTOEC; the guy we got is good but I can't get enough time with him.*

22.   If schools are re-structured so that they have a major focus on a particular stage of schooling, they will have a better opportunity of meeting the curriculum needs of all of their students, and of having a better understanding of acceptable standards, which is difficult in senior classes of only three or four students. In addition, what is required to realise the new goals for Year 7 and Year 10 will be more easily achieved where there is cooperation among the schools in the precinct, rather the current system of isolated islands of teaching and learning.

23.   It is one thing to offer a curriculum subject, it is another to have a teacher fully trained to teach it, and yet another to be sure that the teacher has appropriate pedagogical skills for the level at which the course is directed. Bringing the whole of a precinct's expertise to bear on issues of pedagogy and curriculum knowledge will provide for the best teaching and learning for all students.

Transitions

24.   In Chapter 5 we discussed the importance of a smooth transition for students between the various stages of schooling. Under our current structures some support is

given for the transition to high school; however, as primary and secondary schools are separate organisations, the nature and quality of that support are variable. A submission to the review noted *many schools do offer significant orientation programs but only some are curriculum based.* The submission referred to research (Braggett, 1997) on best practice in the middle years, which promotes a need for more continuous schooling models allowing upper primary and secondary teachers to share information about pedagogies, assessment and curriculum. Many parents of secondary students agreed with the forging of more meaningful links between primary and secondary teachers, stating things like

> *primary schools should be given benchmark examples of what the secondary schools expect in Year 7 and the schools should be working together over Years 6 and 7 to get the kids there.*

25.   In 1985 when separation of schools into junior high schools and senior colleges was introduced in the NT, the report 'High Schools and Secondary Colleges in the Northern Territory' commented that it is essential to have mechanisms in place for collaboration and continuity between schools so that minimal disruption to learning occurs when they move from one level to the next. 'Continuity and Change', a subsequent report on the effectiveness of the junior-senior split, was prepared for the Government in 1992 by the Education Advisory Council (EAC). It recommended that a formal mechanism be established between secondary colleges and their feeder schools for continuity of educational experience. Neither of these recommendations has been implemented fully, and as a result there is still a lack of coordination between comprehensive high schools and the senior college in Darwin, and likewise between the junior high schools and the senior college in Alice Springs.

26.   Additionally, the EAC report recommended that support be given to a mobility mechanism to facilitate a freer transfer of teaching staff between school types. Our review consultations revealed a lack of movement of teachers out of senior secondary colleges and teachers were concerned about de-skilling when they are working in separate areas and unable to move easily between them. We believe that the pedagogical challenges of the later middle and the senior years are different, and in initial teacher training the emphasis should be on one or the other, with opportunity being given through staff development or additional training to expand a teacher's repertoire to another stage after confidence has been gained in one.

27.   In the current arrangements in the NT, transitions from Year 10 to Year 11, particularly when they involve a change of school to a senior college, can be another difficult phase for some students to manage, despite the supportive efforts of teachers. Some students believe

> *Standards are not high enough in the junior school. There's a big jump from Year 10 to Year 11.*

A teacher at a senior college summed up some of the issues that prevent a smooth transition, saying

> *We* [the comprehensive schools and the senior college] *need a mechanism to talk to each other. Competition between schools can be good, it can make us pull ourselves up, but it's also bad in that we don't interact, meet, collaborate and share information.*

28.   Transitions are made even more complex when they involve moving from a remote situation to a school in larger centre or in a town, whether the school is mainstream or specifically Indigenous, and whether boarding is involved or not. The parents and teachers of students who came from a community which had a better-defined 'sister school' relationship with the town or hub school said that those students were more comfortable with the transition. This was especially so when communication between the two was close and consistent.

29.   During the consultation phase it became evident that many teachers felt that they would like more information regarding previous learning experiences and future learning needs of their students. Teachers commented on being *unsure of the standards required* or seeking confirmation that they were *on the right track*. Some primary teachers, however, told the review that in their final year at primary school, students prepare comprehensive portfolios of their work to pass on to the secondary school, but the secondary teachers do not seem to be interested in these. If schools are linked to form Learning Precincts, administrative arrangements can be put in place to enable teachers and other staff in these schools to work together in learning communities to share information about standards of work at the various stages of schooling, and many of these problems can then be addressed.

30.   The team discussed separate middle years schools and senior schools arrangements in other jurisdictions, drawing the conclusion that middle years schools and senior schools should not operate completely independently. Separation would not enable the continuity and consistency of pedagogy, curriculum and mentoring for students we consider essential for their learning growth and success in secondary education. Furthermore, totally separate structures do not allow or encourage the sharing of resources, facilities or personnel in a manner that would be of benefit to all students.

Early school leavers

31.   There are young people who for a variety of reasons leave school early. Research has shown that those students who fail, drop out or do not successfully complete school are unlikely to possess the necessary skills and qualifications to acquire well-paid secure employment or to make a positive and productive contribution to their community (Business Council of Australia, 2003). While the reasons for leaving school are multiple and complex, the most common reasons are a desire to do an apprenticeship or find a

job, disaffection with a teacher or the system, and poor literacy and numeracy skills (ACER, 2000; ACER, 1999).

32.   Consultations the review conducted with students who had left school early and others 'at risk' revealed, amongst other things, that these young people were concerned that some schools are unable to offer a broad selection of quality subjects at the senior secondary level. A growing body of literature reveals that strategies to improve retention rates should be comprehensive, and that fragmented and individualistic approaches are usually ineffective. The literature also suggests that early prevention and intervention for students at risk of leaving school early are vital (DETYA, 2001). It is important to offer programs that are relevant to and inclusive of all young people, and re-entry opportunities need to be designed to meet the specific needs of students (ACER, 2000).

33.   It could be said that school structures as we know them do not meet the needs of young adults 'at risk', and may actually contribute to some students leaving. This is particularly the case in remote areas, where the secondary provision can be minimal or non-existent, and no matter how hard the school staff tries, schooling can be seen by the young people to be irrelevant to their present circumstances, or to their likely futures. In many cases the secondary provision is too close to the primary level, not only in the curriculum and pedagogy, but also in physical proximity to the *little kids* and to the opposite sex, for it to be acceptable to Indigenous young adults.

34.   DETYA (2001) has commissioned research to identify best practice and innovation in working with students at risk of leaving school early. All of the schools described in the best practice cases have undergone some structural or cultural change. The interventions devised included curriculum initiatives, which involved forging new partnerships with other education and training providers. Some schools in the Territory have already successfully developed partnerships to address the educational needs of early leavers; however, a lot more needs to be done to improve retention rates, particularly for Indigenous young people. Learning Precincts would allow for more formal partnerships with other education and training providers to be arranged and promoted, so that students in all areas of the Territory have access to such curriculum initiatives that will encourage them to stay at school or to continue formal learning in some way.

Social and emotional needs

35.   A persistent theme in submissions and consultations was that secondary schools have to change to meet the increasing number and complexity of social and emotional issues faced by young people today. There was widespread recognition that the roles of teachers and schools have changed. For some young people, school provides the only real stability in their lives. Evidence from the review process attested to the increasing

numbers who are abusive or abused, are violent, have drug problems, or who live outside of home without the necessary financial and family support. As one teacher said, *I am doing more counselling than teaching*, and another questioned, *Is it our role to address these problems? We are teachers.* There was widespread agreement about the need for *more support at the system level to assist with these welfare issues. We need more special positions for welfare support such as social workers and psychologists.*

36.   In 1994 each urban high school was given an additional allocation above enrolment entitlement to fulfil the role of careers adviser. This position has been used in a variety of ways in schools, often to supplement the need for a personal counsellor. More importantly, urban schools with a student enrolment in excess of 1 000 and others with an enrolment of fewer than 250 are each entitled to one position, which is rather anomalous in terms of size. While some larger high schools have converted a teaching position to the role of school counsellor, it is impossible for smaller schools to relinquish a position without a substantial increase in class sizes. Furthermore, there are no clear guidelines regarding the skills or qualifications required in these positions. There was widespread support across the system for the view expressed in one submission that argued for *the appointment of qualified school counsellors into all primary and secondary schools…to build emotional robustness*. The submission acknowledges the need for schools within a grouping to share such a resource, stating

> *Counsellors could be based in secondary schools 2 to 3 days per week with an allocation to feeder primary schools for the remainder of the week ... and if psychologists were appointed, their roles would primarily involve assessment, counselling and consultancy to the whole of the school community.*

37.   Currently, School Based Police Officers (SBPOs) and school nurses work with young people in one or more secondary schools and a number of feeder primary schools in urban and regional areas. Their services are generally in high demand and valued. The review team noted that while there was some concern expressed about the need for more resources in these areas so that the needs of all schools could be adequately met, one locality has shared key personnel between schools, assisting them in identifying and monitoring students with special needs. Some remote schools have forged positive working relationships with the community clinic, police station and other agencies, in the manner that we are suggesting. These activities will be much easier to establish and be more cost-effective with the formation of learning precincts.

38.   Many teachers, assistant principals and principals spoke to the review about students with significant behavioural and emotional problems whose educational, social and emotional needs cannot be met by the resources currently available in schools. On occasion, these students can be a threat to the safety and learning of others. Many schools have established discipline structures to manage inappropriate behaviour but

these are not always adequate given the complexity and degree of some of their emotional and social issues. As one teacher commented

> *We have a withdrawal room, which is effective for some. And we also use a combination of detentions and contracts. Then we suspend them. However, suspension is not really an effective strategy for those kids with ongoing emotional problems.*

Many teachers agreed that suspension is *a merry-go-round* where students more often than not return to school only to repeat the behaviour that led to their suspension. Other suspended young people do not return to school at all.

39.   At present young people identified as oppositional, defiant and aggressive are offered intensive support through a withdrawal program at STAR (Students at Risk) centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. However, most students attending these centres are of primary school age and secondary teachers believe that some form of alternative provision for secondary students is needed for a small number of young people whose social, emotional and learning needs cannot be met in traditional schooling structures. Some interesting and innovative programs are under way which involve calling in a range of expertise from the community to provide remediation, work and life skills in a less alienating environment, often accompanied by an invitation for the whole family to participate. Teachers made a range of suggestions to the review about the school providing ongoing counselling, individual case management, literacy and numeracy programs and other specialist programs run by community organisations. However, educators who spoke to the review team about such initiatives acknowledged that any form of 'alternative' schooling had to be closely linked to other schools within the area so that young people can eventually return to mainstream education.

40.   Currently, as part of the DEET Student Enrolment Attendance and Retention Strategy, a number of 'alternative provision' programs are being proposed at the system level for the Northern Territory. The review supports the development of such programs and believes they must offer a range of flexible pathways and inclusive learning opportunities for students in both the later middle and senior years. Importantly, the ultimate aim of these programs should be to re-engage young people into mainstream educational pathways; although it is recognised this may not prove possible or even desirable for some.

41.   For this reason we believe it is important that inclusive and flexible programs be available in all areas and they must be closely linked to other educational providers and with all forms of assistance available in the local area. We support the linking of these programs to the work being currently done with the NT Government's Youth At Risk Task Force where cross-agency Youth Support Teams are being developed to case manage young people exhibiting extreme behaviour in the community.

42.	Decisions about the best way to address the social and welfare needs of students often have to be specific to the local situation to be effective. However there was considerable evidence presented in both submissions and consultations that school communities do not have sufficient existing resources to meet adequately the emotional and social needs of many students. Not every school or community has ready access to qualified counsellors, psychologists, school nurses and SBPOs; and even if existing resources are distributed more evenly between schools and closer relationships are established with other agencies, there are simply not enough qualified health and social welfare professionals available to work with young people. The review team heard that the serious mental health and social welfare issues of too many young people are not being addressed, and these affect not only their ability to learn but also the learning of others. It is important that allied health or social welfare professionals are available to work long term with individual students to address their personal needs as well as offering programs for students in areas such as anger management or assertiveness training.

43.	We need to become more able to share expertise across learning sites, and make sure that those services and experienced people who are already available within some schools, and who exist in the community outside the schools, are identified and helped to participate. Formal arrangements for the linking or sharing of resources, knowledge and decision making between schools and the community, as advocated in our learning precinct model, would assist in this process. The review believes extra resources must be given to groups of schools or learning precincts to address students' social and emotional needs, and decisions about the nature of the resources required are best made at the local level. The establishment of learning precincts will allow groups of schools to identify the types of resources needed and for these extra resources to be accessed and used in the most cost-effective manner.

Equity and resources

44.	The review saw first hand the wide variations in the levels of resourcing and infrastructure between schools and the degree of their utilisation.

45.	While it is difficult immediately to re-distribute teachers and others across the system, the establishment of learning precincts would assist in sharing staff within a particular grouping. Provided it is part of their agreed terms and conditions of service, it would not be unreasonable to expect some staff to move to another school, or work across a number of schools within the precinct so that their skills could be shared more evenly.

46.   Teachers of Exemplary Practice[14] (TEPs) could be particularly useful in this regard. TEPs account for nearly 15% of the government secondary teacher workforce. However, their distribution between secondary schools is uneven, with one school having in excess of 20 while another high school has one. At present there are 73 secondary TEPs in urban schools, nine in regional schools and only one in remote areas. If they were shared more evenly across a precinct or the system, it would allow all young people to have opportunity to access a range of expertise to improve their learning outcomes. Roles and responsibilities expected of TEPs vary significantly within and between schools. Consideration should be given to expecting Level 2 and Level 3 TEPs to take on precinct-wide pedagogical leadership or mentoring roles. This issue is taken up in Chapter 9.

47.   Many educators recognised the need for extra resources to improve the educational outcomes of their students, but were concerned that they be put to best use by being shared amongst a group of schools. This could work to some benefit, for example, where allocation of resources is largely on a *per capita* basis as in allocations for English as a Second Language (ESL), or Indigenous student numbers. If several schools combine, their total numbers in these categories might well be enough to fund more staff members who can then be shared between the schools in that learning precinct. While the allocation of teaching resources for the ESL General Support program is not just on a *per capita* formula, many schools still end up being eligible for only a 0.5 position. They often find it difficult to fill this position, particularly in remote and regional areas. In some places, the high school and primary school are sharing a teacher who works half time at each school. Sometimes a school employs someone to work 0.5 ESL and then 0.5 in special education. The precinct model would allow for schools to pool resources allocated in both areas and to appoint a specialist teacher to work across the one area in two or more schools.

48.   The current allocation of special education resources appears to have little correlation with the numbers of special education students in secondary schools. For example, for historical reasons some schools are allocated more support than others. Currently only one secondary school has any special budgetary or staffing allocation to meet the needs of gifted and talented students, although some high schools offer extension programs where they group students of high potential together to advance their learning.

49.   There is no provision for careers advisers in remote schools, other than the support offered through NTOEC. Similarly most remote schools are too small to have a dedicated school nurse or SBPO. These are inequities that should be addressed, but given the size of many remote communities it is unrealistic to expect that each small school can be

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[14] Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs) are teachers who are paid additional allowances because they have been recognised through a formal process as having exemplary teaching skills.

given these resources. However, grouping schools into learning precincts might allow for the combined numbers to attract new resources, or more effective use of those available from somewhere in the larger grouping.

50.   Several issues emerged in the consultations and submissions in relation to the resourcing of school libraries. Some schools have well staffed and resourced libraries with excellent ICT facilities, an up-to-date collection and offer access for students both after hours and in some school holidays. On the other hand, students and staff in some schools told the review their school libraries struggled for resources, were understaffed or had no staff at all and as a consequence, there was minimal or no assistance for students with accessing information and developing information skills. A number of respondents questioned whether it was essential to have *teacher* librarians, pointing out it would be more cost-effective to employ *librarians* who had expertise or training in working with young people.

51.   The most effective school libraries are no longer separate repositories of information where students and teachers are assisted to find extra resources but operate as an integral part of the learning program. Library staff equip students with the skills to connect with, interpret, analyse and use information to construct new knowledge and understandings. There is less emphasis on collections, systems and staff and more focus on working with students to make a real difference to their learning outcomes.

52.   If precincts are established with a single line budget allocation, decisions can be made at the local level about meeting the educational needs of students through the most cost effective use of physical, human and financial resources. Moreover, if partnerships are established with the local community there will be greater opportunities for the linking or sharing of library resources between both the school and the community. This is already happening in a number of communities and strengthens the notion of people at all ages being engaged in lifelong learning as well as being more cost-effective.

53.   The formal and informal relationships that schools have established with external government and non-government agencies vary significantly. Some schools have Centrelink and/or Group Training operating on site while others do not. Some schools have other agencies providing on-site personal counselling while others do not. Some schools have a close working relationship with local enterprise or business, and some do not have this available to them at all. While it is not the review team's role to mandate these relationships uniformly, because local needs should drive such arrangements, it is our view that all organisations working with young people in a related area should be connected to provide the maximum benefit to their learning and well-being.

54.   Schools in urban and regional towns in the NT can boast of having some
        infrastructure that is equal to the best in Australia. However, no one school has the range
        or quality of infrastructure to provide for the total diversity of students' curriculum needs.
        While a school could have a state of the art media and music centre and another might
        have industry standard trade or hospitality facilities, no one school has it all, and nor
        should they, given the size of many schools. The review saw some excellent school and
        community facilities that were grossly under-utilised. In many remote areas there is very
        little or no secondary provision at all, and many communities do not, on their own, have
        the numbers to establish it under the current system. One of the compelling arguments for
        learning precincts is that such resources will be shared amongst schools not only to
        maximise their use but more importantly to enhance the educational opportunities of
        greater numbers of students across the Territory.

55.   This is already occurring on an informal basis. For example, students from some
        schools go to other schools for particular subjects such as VET, Science and ICT, and in
        other cases teachers do the travelling, to teach classes in another school in the same
        area, or even go from a town to a remote community. There are increasing examples of
        several remote communities coming together with a range of services and organisations
        to provide a more integrated set of responses to needs that are common to them all. In
        many ways this move towards sharing and rationalising resources is evolving naturally
        across the Territory, and has been progressed to some degree by DEET's Cluster[15]
        model, but it is not uniform or consistent. The move to the more formal and structured
        arrangements of a learning precinct will build on what is happening already, and add
        strength and impetus to the changes.

56.   When schools combine to form learning precincts it is likely that there will be some
        areas where they will have an excess of resources. Many secondary schools and primary
        schools are currently operating below enrolment capacity (see Chapter 2) and it may be
        that schools within a precinct will decide with their local community that the resources
        currently being used to operate schools with limited enrolments would be better spent in
        other areas. A number of schools are running very small classes in the same subject area
        and these may have to be rationalised to make better use of teaching resources. The
        review believes such decisions need to be taken at the local level after considerable
        consultation with the community and any savings made from rationalising resources must
        be re-allocated to improve the quality of teaching and learning at other sites within the
        learning precinct.

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[15] The 7 clusters are: Darwin City, Northern Suburbs, Palmerston and Rural, and Arnhem in the Top End; Rivers
(Katherine region); and Desert Oaks and Central Storm (Central Australia).

57.   Another area where a re-allocation of resources is likely to be needed is in the leadership and management positions in schools within a precinct. The review believes that in the initial stages of precinct establishment the Interim Head of Precinct (see Chapter 7) should be funded from a precinct establishment grant; however, once the precinct is fully established, funding for this position will have to come from within existing resources. This will require a re-structuring of leadership and management positions in line with the particular duties of each executive position, which will have been written to meet the new focus on teaching and learning at the various stages of schooling. It may be, for example, that there will be a head of middle school rather than a head of faculty, that there are assistant principals for teaching and learning rather than for just curriculum and that principals of schools will be required to offer leadership for teaching and learning while the Head of Precinct will assume overall responsibility for strategic planning, supervising assets and resource management, and establishing partnerships in the local community.

Local governance and an integrated services approach

58.   Currently all NT schools are grouped geographically into seven large Clusters, with a mix of primary and secondary in each. This grouping of schools was an outcome of the 1998 Education Review, to provide a flatter management structure where principals could be more active in communications with DEET, and to allow for closer links between schools and DEET, so that the central functions could be more informed about and responsive to key issues. Within this structure, each principal takes on a portfolio role, such as curriculum, or student services and so on, and links with a particular branch or division in DEET a number of times each year to contribute to decision making and information sharing. However, the degree of effectiveness of the two way communication is said to be variable.

59.   Thus the Cluster arrangement was designed as a management model to improve links between principals in schools, and divisions in DEET. The review was told that it did not result in a major devolution of power in a system that has remained largely centralised, and had no clear focus on improving student outcomes or teaching and learning, although these matters have become an aim in some clusters. There were frequent comments that

> *It wasn't a devolution of power, it was a devolution of paperwork. And all that's done is to make more work for administrative staff in schools, so that more resources have to be put in there, rather than into actually helping teachers in the classroom.*
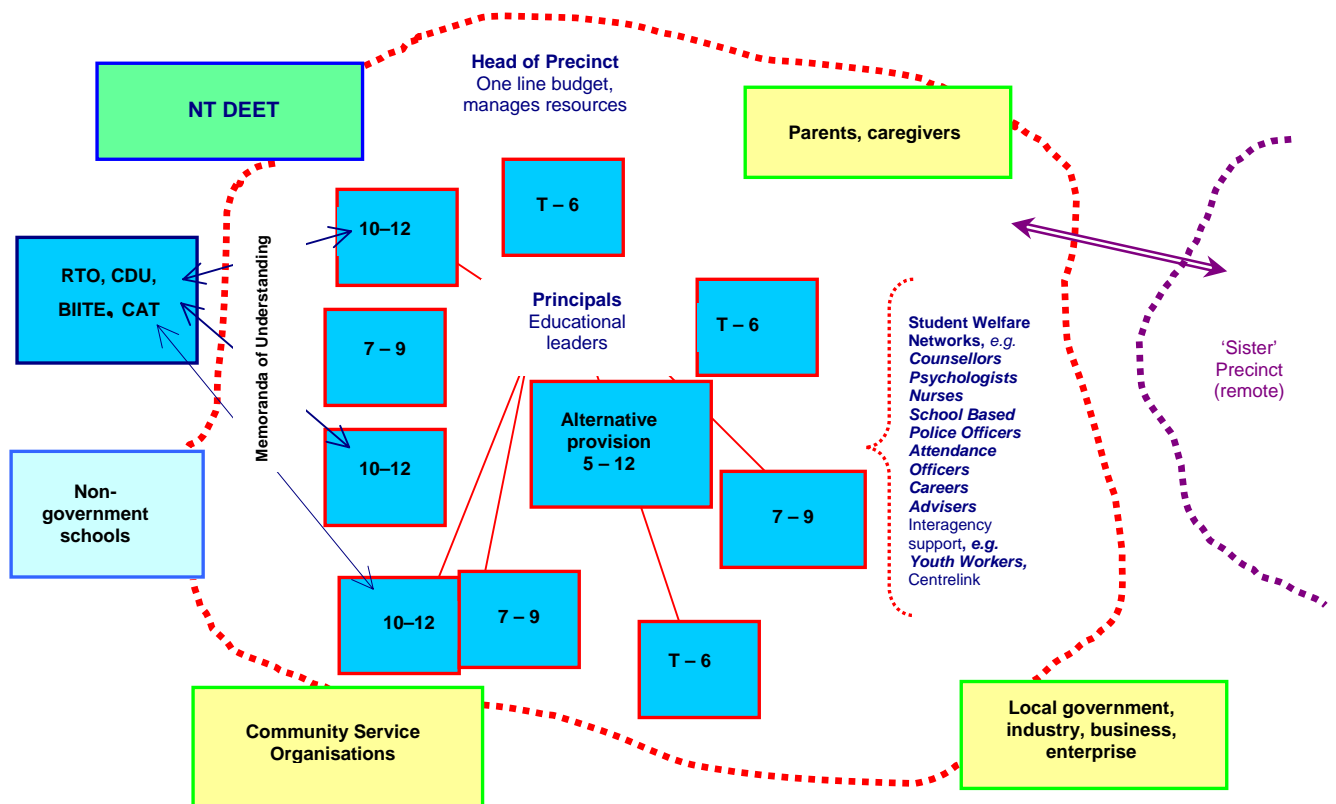
60.   In our view, the main weakness in the Cluster model is that it does not go far enough in the decentralisation of real power, responsibility and accountability. Principals share with one another and DEET, but the interactions do not often extend to other members of the school staff or the school community. Many educational decisions can be made most

effectively at the local level, regardless of whether we are talking about education for a young person living in suburban Fannie Bay or on the remote community at Willowra. In most cases the people on the ground are in the best position to guide the educational process for a young person and are better able to forge formal relationships with other local or connected education providers, community organisations, external agencies, businesses and enterprises. Provided that this occurs within a system-wide framework of responsibility and accountability, local decision making ought to be supported.

61.   This is not to say that we think that every tiny school in the Territory should become a separate self-managing entity, although this was a position that was also considered by the review team. This is just not feasible in terms of size and geography, let alone resources. In the end, it was agreed that the need to provide an integrated services approach across several levels and layers of schools and communities dictated that first there should be a level of integration designed to bring separate schools together, so that they could work towards a coordinated and effective use of resources and expertise to best serve the needs of young people.

62.   In many of the schools we visited, regardless of location, we saw limited evidence of formal agreements with other sectors of the community who either cater for the needs of secondary-aged young people, or have a relationship with them. This was particularly noticeable in remote communities, but not confined to them. For example, we saw places where Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), Centralian College, and the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) were all providing training, with little or no coordination with each other. Many communities have local councils, stores, health centres, police stations and often a recreation officer, all seemingly working independently of each other; or if relationships did exist they relied on individual goodwill, which is extremely unreliable in the long term, given the turnover of personnel in these communities. An integrated services approach that addresses issues and problems with the whole family and community is at the forefront of our agenda, and this echoes initiatives that are already being undertaken to formalise these relationships in many remote places. It is our intention to support and strengthen this.

63.   The review team is aware that Community Controlled Schools trials are under way in four locations. This initiative grew out of the 'Learning Lessons' report recommendations (Collins and Lea, 1999). The underlying philosophies of these pilots and the review team's proposal for learning precincts are similar. Indeed, in developing the present proposal the team was influenced strongly by 'Learning Lessons' in general and took note of this initiative in particular.

64.   Especially for Indigenous people, but also other groups, having the whole family involved in schools working together with young adults and pre-school and primary age children has many benefits. The team suggests that schools join together to form learning precincts which work collaboratively with parents, community and with other sectors to best serve young people's needs in a better way than single schools or clusters have been able to do so far. Where possible, the best way for this to occur is through formal agreements. For family and community these could involve a social contract. For other sectors such agreements are beginning to be negotiated and articulated through new proposals such as that for the joining together of local councils to form regional authorities.

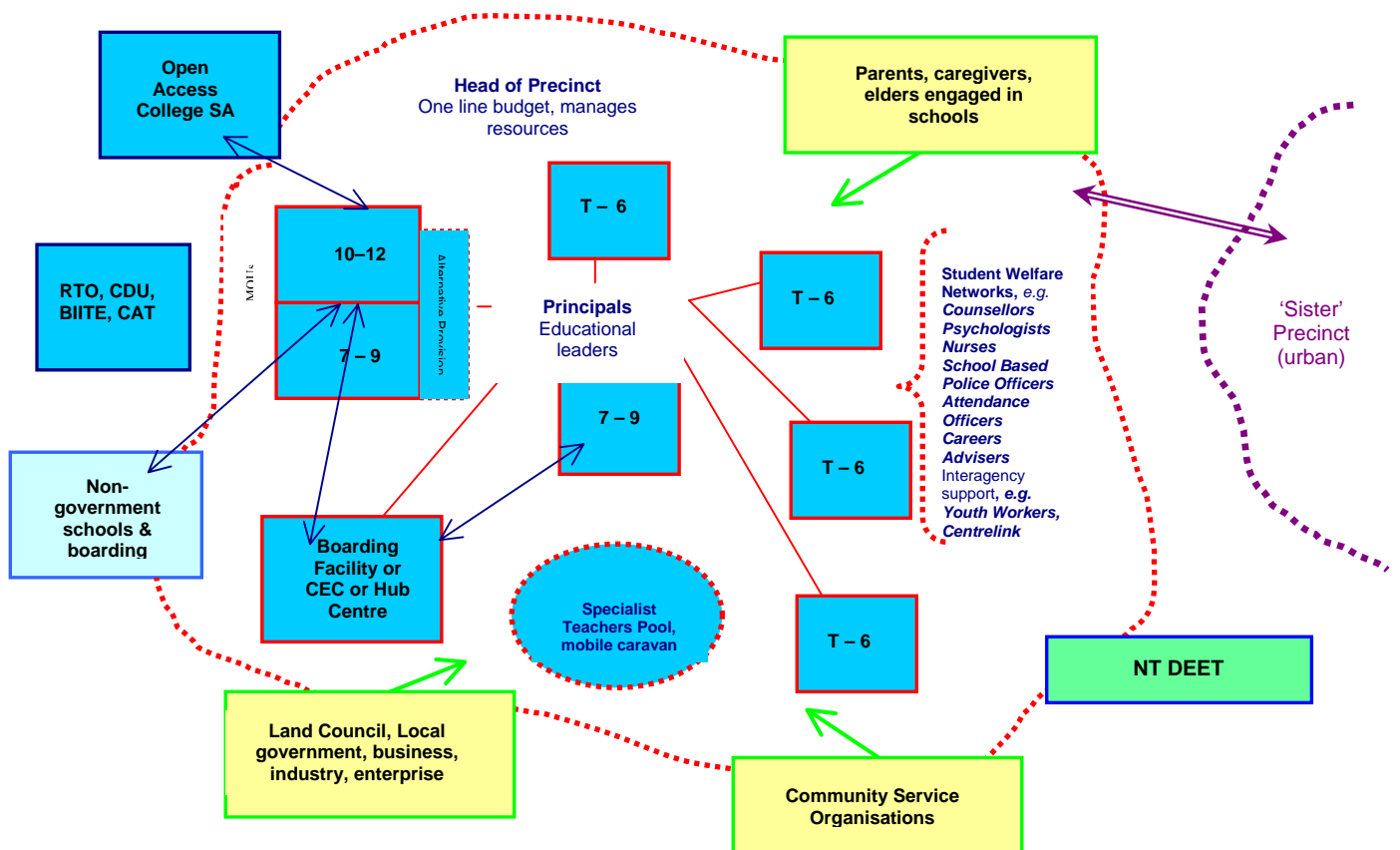**MODEL OF AN URBAN LEARNING PRECINCT**

65.   A Learning Precinct model will increase the capacity of schools to meet the full range of curriculum and pedagogical needs of young people, to better address their social and emotional needs, and to smooth their transitions between the stages of schooling. A learning precinct should establish

- schools or sub-schools that focus on particular stages of schooling but with strong links between them to facilitate transitions
- a site or sites for alternative provision

- student welfare networks with a range of professional and para professional support
- options for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for teaching and learning
- formal relationships with other educational providers and community service organisations in the area
- formal and informal links with local business and industry
- opportunities for parents and caregivers to be involved in the education of their children at a range of levels and in a variety of roles
- formal or informal links with non-government schools
- links with precincts in other localities to share expertise

and in remote areas it may include a regional boarding school.

MODEL OF A REMOTE LEARNING PRECINCT

The following table explains how Learning Precincts differ from current arrangements in terms of structures and organisation, curriculum and pedagogy, transitions support, resources, and services for students' social and emotional needs.

How will Learning Precincts be different from the existing structures?

Schools in clusters	Learning Precincts
Structures and organisation	
Individual schools cater for various stages of schooling, and are grouped in seven clusters for management purposes, with few formal educational links Each school has a separate vision and action plan School structures include - Primary Schools T – 6 / T – 7 - Area Schools T – 10 - Comprehensive High Schools 8 – 12 - Junior High Schools 7 – 10 - Senior Colleges 11 – 12 - Community Education Centres T – ungraded secondary Focus on senior years often at expense of junior/middle years in comprehensive high schools	Groups of schools join together to meet the needs of students at the various stages of schooling, with strong links, common vision and strategic plans Learning Precincts will include - Early childhood and early middle years T – 6 - Middle years 7 – 9 - Senior years 10 – 12 and onwards - These stages may be in separate schools or sub-schools within larger schools, e.g. combinations such as T – 9 or 7 – 12 or 5 – 12 would be possible Focus on all stages of schooling
Curriculum and pedagogy	
Limited curriculum choices in the smaller schools, particularly in the senior years, and inappropriate pedagogy often due to large class sizes or teachers not qualified in areas taught Increasing numbers of urban students doing distance education courses through NTOEC (double counting)	Increased subject choices, appropriate class sizes and teachers qualified in areas taught Full range of senior courses available within a learning precinct
Transitions	
Nature and quality of support through transition points variable or non-existent Lack of continuity in learning and insufficient specialist support leading to behaviour management and retention issues	Close liaison between schools within a learning precinct to support students through transitions, to improve continuity of learning and to assist in the transfer of vital information about students' educational, social and emotional needs
Resources	
Schools compete for resources and expertise Unequal or inadequate allocation of resources Unable to meet needs of all students Some resources under-utilised	Sharing of resources and expertise More equitable distribution of existing and additional resources, to meet needs of all students Resources shared or re-allocated for more effective use
Services for students' social and emotional needs	
Some schools have counsellors, nurses, school-based police officers and some have programs for alternative provision Other schools have some or none of these	Student welfare networks with access for all to counsellors, psychologists, nurses, school-based police officers, youth workers and alternative provision

Responsibilities and accountabilities

66.   Planning for the formation and staged implementation of Learning Precincts should commence in 2004. This should involve a process of consultation and negotiation between schools, with DEET, and with parents and the wider community, including other education providers, community organisations, business and enterprise, and other service agencies, with a view to full implementation in most cases at the beginning of 2006. This process of precinct development is described in Chapter 7.

67.   Those in positions of leadership and management will be expected to work with all stakeholders to develop a shared vision that will engage young people in their education, after which strategic and business plans will be developed that provide information on the ways in which the recommendations of this report will be brought to life in the particular context of each precinct, and how this change will itself be managed. Thus those plans will identify goals and end points for change and show how teachers, young people, parents and community will be assisted to lead and own the change. Plans will also identify accountability for performance to goals, measurement of outcomes, and ways in which performance will be managed.

68.   Learning Precincts will have a brief to be innovative, to initiate secondary education provision where it does not yet exist, and to better manage it where it does. Therefore they will need to cover the following areas: meeting young people's needs; managing resources; service delivery; local governance; interaction between precincts and with DEET.

Meeting young people's needs

69.   The learning precinct and the schools within it will be the registered or accredited approved secondary education provider and therefore the precinct itself will be responsible for the delivery of all education according to the current curriculum guidelines of the NT Board of Studies, SSABSA, and VET. The extent of the program a school can teach will depend very much on size and resources available. Not all precincts can have the same profile. Each precinct will be expected to work with staff, students, other providers and the community to develop locally relevant implementation of the guidelines, with a view to enabling more flexible pathways and subject choice, delivered through dynamic and purposeful pedagogies, while at the same time preserving intellectual rigour.

70.   The precinct is responsible for teaching and learning and the planning documents will need to include all matters raised in this report that are relevant to that particular precinct, within the broad areas of implementing the new stages of schooling, supporting transitions, providing relevant learning, literacy and numeracy remediation, enterprise and vocational learning and VET, technacy development through ICT as curriculum and as a

pedagogical practice (the Lighthouse Schools project will perhaps lead the way here), extra-curricular or extended curriculum activities, community based learning, student leadership activities, and so on.

71.   The learning precinct must be in a position to offer the curriculum and pedagogy needed at all the stages of schooling — this is one of its key roles. It must also cater for the special needs of Indigenous students, boys and girls, gifted and talented, students with disabilities and other special needs, ESL, those with insufficient literacy, numeracy and technacy, and for alternative education programs where students are unable to cope with mainstream schooling. An important aspect is the utilisation of information and communications technologies (ICT) for teaching and learning, particularly in remote areas. The precinct will make explicit its plan for the development of professional learning communities, pedagogical leadership and research and innovation to maximise the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programs in its schools.

72.   An important aspect of teaching and learning planning will be actions designed to increase and maintain attendance and retention. The learning precinct will need to make clear the ways in which it will provide for pathways mentoring, for transitions and for lifelong learning. It will be required to assist in the development and maintenance of clear assessment and reporting, aiming to provide significant information about students through their Learning Profiles, through Futures Portfolios, and through assisting in longitudinal tracking.

73.   The precinct must plan strategically to develop student welfare networks involving an integrated services approach, working together with other agencies and organisations to become a 'one stop shop' for all needs of all young people, whether these be psychological, social, personal or health needs. Although this may not be the responsibility of each school, the responsibility must rest with the precinct, and be clearly articulated in its planning.

Managing resources

74.   The learning precinct must plan for the strategic management of all human, physical and financial resources and assets within its boundaries. It will need to show how it plans for those resources to be more effectively shared between schools, between educational providers, and between education providers and other people, organisations, services and agencies, both within the precinct, and between precincts. The precinct will need to enter partnership arrangements that reflect a situation of reciprocal benefits.

75.   The review team is of the view that the total resources of the system are not currently being used as effectively as will be possible under the proposed precinct system. There

may not be a need, for example, for an administration manager in each school, but rather for a system across the whole precinct that provides such a function. This will not only release resources for other purposes, it will allow for more effective management of school financial and physical resources. Resources will also be released by bringing together small classes so that inefficiencies might be eliminated. Each precinct will need to undertake early on an audit of current resources, and plan their more effective allocation.

76. The learning precinct's strategic plan should be developed, based on the resource analysis outlined. It must clearly articulate and support the links between all schools and other learning sites within the precinct and beyond, including sister school relationships between town and remote, to foster a seamless transition for students as they move between stages and places.

77.   Urban and regional learning precincts will be encouraged to assist with remote delivery, and to define the arrangements by which they will work with particular schools in remote areas. Remote precincts and boarding schools will also need to further define and develop supportive relationships.

78.   The learning precinct must plan for development of leadership which is distributed amongst many people, both within the schools and outside them, and relational between those leaders and other teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students. It will need to find ways of ensuring continuity of corporate knowledge when particular people come and go, and in some precincts if not all, will need to focus particularly on providing support and mentoring for Indigenous leaders both as staff and as partners in the community.

79.   Staff will belong to the learning precinct, not a school, and so, as part of their conditions of service, they could be expected to move around the precinct to meet changing needs. Eventually, the precinct will have the power to determine its own staffing structure, and will identify its own staffing needs in primary and secondary schools so that it might deploy different mixes of staff and para-professionals to meet new demands. It will select all staff, often from a pool recruited centrally, and manage their performance. There should be opportunities for staff to apply for transfer to positions in other precincts, using the current transfer arrangements.

80.   A precinct might bring in leaders, professionals and other staff from outside for short periods of time to contribute to its professional learning activities. In collaboration with DEET and other providers, it will be responsible for local induction and for professional development of all staff. This part of its plan will include an explanation of the ways in

which it intends to establish and develop its own particular professional learning communities, opportunities for research and innovation within and across precincts, and how it intends to share its resource materials (or ideas for them) and expertise, to better develop practices across the precinct, and with other precincts.

81.   Learning precincts will need to work with DEET and with unions to negotiate or advise on any changes to conditions and terms of employment, including salaries and promotion positions that will need to be more flexible to cope with new arrangements consequent upon this report. This might include flexible working arrangements, changes to the student day or school year or timetabling, to ensure student access to a range of programs. It will be necessary to work with staff to develop job descriptions that fit the particular vision and context of that precinct and schools within it.

Service delivery

82.   Strategic plans will include proposals for new or re-modelled infrastructure, and different ways of using current facilities to enhance pedagogy and to encourage community use or use by other schools. Infrastructure maintenance plans should reflect an integrated services approach in which reciprocal arrangements can benefit all.

83.   Where it is necessary to satisfy the pathway needs of students, subsidised travel will have to be planned for as part of the precinct budget. The review was told that DEET currently spends approximately $1.2 million per annum on the provision of bus passes for some urban students. It is possible that these funds could be more equitably allocated to support student travel within precincts.

84.   Each learning precinct will need to enter into new partnerships or contractual arrangements with other education providers, and with the VET system, in order to negotiate a comprehensive and coordinated education delivery in the precinct. This might include distance delivery as well as face-to-face, and use of each other's facilities as well as staff and materials.

85.   Each precinct will need to work with its local community to establish mutual recognition of needs and simultaneous development of opportunities for education hand in hand with enterprise, livelihood, and work.

Local governance

86.   It is anticipated that current School Councils would be given the opportunity to be actively engaged in planning new governance arrangements, as the learning precincts should be established through consultation and negotiation with stakeholder groups in school communities. The process should lead into a situation where community members

are a significant partner in governing the educational provision within the fully developed precinct.

87. Adoption of the Learning Precinct model involves a re-assessment of the roles and effectiveness of the current School Councils. The review heard a range of views on these. While some parents welcomed the opportunity to be involved in educational decision making, many more believed they do not have sufficient skills or time to devote to the tasks required of them as a School Council member. They spoke of being *locked out by the educational jargon* and *not having sufficient knowledge to contribute to decision making*. Many parents relied on the principal for advice on the big issues. However, many parents would still like the opportunity to be involved in their child's education but in a way that makes fewer demands on their time and does not require specialist knowledge of educational issues or financial management.

88. While the role of individual school communities should be maintained and nurtured, the legislation relating to school councils should be reviewed to reflect the new hierarchical arrangements in the proposed precinct model. The precinct boards will be charged with many of the responsibilities currently resting, in theory at least, with the school councils. They will ultimately need to accept the responsibility and decision-making power that exceeds that invested with the current councils, including developing strategic and business plans, being involved on selection panels for promotion positions as well as making contributions to and monitoring the financial plans of the precinct. The school councils should become more of an advisory rather than a decision-making body, and they should have re-defined roles and responsibilities outlining the contribution they can make to the newly formed precinct boards. Legislative changes will be required in relation to school governance, and these are discussed in Chapter 13.

Interaction between precincts, and with DEET

89. There is potential for positive interaction between precincts, especially those that share geographic borders or common interests or culture. The nature of such interactions should be specifically designed and articulated in the agreed strategic and operational plans of each of the precincts. The review is aware that numbers of 'sister school' relationships have developed recently between some urban and remote schools through the Cluster model, and it is anticipated that similar 'sister precinct' relationships will be formed over time.

90. In the staged implementation of the proposed precinct model, DEET will need to concern itself with capacity and capability development within the various precincts to a larger or smaller extent as time goes on.

91.   In a context where precincts are intended to become more and more self-managing, the role of DEET will need to change to one of supporting rather than directing secondary education within the Territory. Such support will involve the provision of guidelines to facilitate the work of the precincts, including frameworks concerning pedagogical development, management of staff and facilities and school and precinct leadership and administration. It is not intended that the creation of HoPs should add another permanent bureaucratic layer between principals and DEET head office. In the long term when all learning precincts are established, the Heads of Precinct would report directly to the Deputy CEs, and the current positions of General Managers Schools should no longer be required.

92.   Precincts are not a totally new idea. Various forms of linkages have been established in the USA and in other Australian states between schools and other education providers, to meet the educational requirements of particular school communities. New types of cross-sectoral provision have emerged in recent years, associated with the development of new institutional arrangements for delivering education and training. Several multi-sector campuses have been established where institutions from different sectors are co-located – three in Western Australia, five in New South Wales, and one each in South Australia and Queensland. The models are designed to allow these institutions to adopt a 'learner centred' approach to education, maximising opportunities for learners to achieve outcomes by providing a range of pathways.

93.   In the past, education systems tended to force people down clearly differentiated tracks. In recent times, the distinction between general and vocational learning has become outdated, and the focus now is more on lifelong learning. The cross-sectoral models are improving retention rates, and are attracting students who otherwise might have 'dropped out' of school. For example, significant improvements in educational outcomes have been achieved by the Coffs Harbour Education Campus in New South Wales (comprising Coffs Harbour Secondary College, TAFE, and Southern Cross University) since its inception in 1995, and Mandurah Senior Secondary College in Western Australia (which is co-located with Murdoch University and Challenger TAFE) has improved the retention rates for the senior years from 40% to 76%. In both institutions students in the senior years have benefited from having access to industry standard facilities and a wide range of learning and career pathways at both TAFE and higher education levels. Moreover there are savings on the costs of facilities and operations in these campuses. A number of staff teach across secondary, TAFE and higher education levels, but all are still employed by the separate sectors.

94.   The precinct model we are proposing is a little different from these interstate examples that have generally been formed to accommodate TAFE facilities, or to bring

schools together, rather than to decide in a fundamental way the role and focus of education in the regions that the current educational institutions serve. This is the power of our proposals – they are designed to focus on the delivery to the young people of an appropriate educational program, which will encompass whatever is required or available, from schools, from other agencies, workplaces, and the whole community.

95. No precinct would be any pre-determined size and this is particularly important in remote communities where issues of culture and language grouping must be a priority focus. Although they might be small, some of those precincts might be a complex and difficult proposition to establish and manage because of remoteness, dispersion and, in many cases, community dysfunction. Student numbers should be only one component in determining the complexity of a Head of Precinct role, and should not be the only consideration when determining levels of remuneration. No two precincts would be identical, as would be expected when decisions are being made locally, and the needs of young people are so diverse. Consequently, educational and management structures of each precinct may in some instances be similar to what is in place now but in other precincts may be vastly different. What will be identical is the pursuit of quality educational outcomes for all young people regardless of where they reside in the NT.

96. Although changing structures does not change the working cultures within them, we believe that Learning Precincts will provide a strong impetus for changing the traditional teaching and management practices of schools. Precincts should benchmark themselves nationally rather than comparing individual school performance against other schools in such a small pond.

97. Learning Precincts are a model that can build and expand on current successes and also provide a structure for greater equity and quality of educational provision despite obstacles of location and isolation. It is the firm view of the review team that there is a need for a new organisational model such as learning precincts, that will enhance the way schools operate and take them forward to fulfil the expectations of the 21st Century. The Territory's young people can only gain from the changes proposed.

Open Access Schools

98. There are specialist schools that provide education services across a region or for the whole Territory and would therefore not be part of any one learning precinct. These are the NT School of Languages (NTSOL), the Alice Springs Language Centre (ASLC), the Northern Territory Music School (NTMS) and the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC). They all have different models for the provision of services to schools,

although there are some basic similarities in that they offer a combination of teaching services, program support and professional development.

Northern Territory School of Languages

99.   Under current arrangements NTSOL has two roles

- Systemic: the provision of policy advice, program support and professional development;
- Managing the provision of teaching: of both after-school, and on a trial basis, in-school classes.

100.   A recently completed review of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) learning in the Northern Territory found that from 1998 to 2002 the number of students studying languages in NT schools declined. The review report 'Connecting Cultures', commented that

> *the school's teaching role was highly valued by those who made use of the services provided by the staff although the lack of accessibility to the after hours classes was an issue.*

It went on to say that more recently NTSOL has tried 'in-school' day classes, where staff from NTSOL teach a class of students as part of the school timetable, and there had been a very positive response from schools involved in this trial.

101.   Students consulted for the secondary education review commented about the lack of availability of languages in their school curricula. Many confirmed the finding of the languages review that after school classes were not a realistic option as they had competing sporting, cultural, part-time work and family commitments. The secondary education review believes that schools or precincts should offer a range of languages within the school timetable. LOTE is one of the eight nationally agreed learning areas and is part of the NTCF.

102.   There was also some concern noted about the professional development model used by NTSOL. 'Connecting Cultures' noted

> *Some felt that the focus of PD was wrongly structured. As one in-school Languages manager wrote: "the PD offered is one off, good ideas type activities with no follow up. No action learning cycles. You go to one-day workshops and that is it. Nothing changes. If the PD program was part of Curriculum Services Branch (CSB) there might be more sustained PD using current thinking".*

Alice Springs Language Centre

103.   The model employed by the Alice Springs Language Centre is focused on the delivery of languages teaching to all government schools in Alice Springs. It also provides some out-of-hours classes and adult classes. 'Connecting Cultures' commented that

the expressed level of school satisfaction with the role, conduct and management of the ASLC, was very high.

The Northern Territory Music School

104.   The NTMS offers specialist instrument and choral tuition to students throughout the Darwin, Palmerston and rural areas. It also provides specialist teaching to schools in the other regional centres and is extending its teaching programs into remote regions through instrumental and classroom teaching programs as well as VET courses.

105.   The focus of the service is very much on the delivery of tuition or teaching; however NTMS also organises special festivals in Darwin and Palmerston such as the Beat and Palmelody to celebrate student achievement in the performing arts. Staff also provide some professional development for teachers in remote schools; and NTMS has two specialist programs, Boys Business (see Chapter 3) and the Remote Communities Music Program, that have achieved national recognition as two of the top five exemplary arts education programs in Australia. The review team noted students who are receiving instrument tuition were very positive about the quality of teaching provided, and schools, particularly in remote areas, supported the classroom and individual tuition programs.

Northern Territory Open Education Centre

106.   NTOEC provides a range education programs by distance mode for students in Years 8 to 12. Students enrol at NTOEC for a variety of reasons. Some are students who live in isolated regions, others are travelling interstate or overseas, others are unable to attend school on medical grounds and another group comprises independent or 'second chance' learners. Indigenous students from numbers of community schools and community education centres are enrolled in NTOEC, as it is the only 'onsite' provider of secondary education for these schools. As noted earlier, there are many dual enrolled students unable to access their subject choices at their current secondary school.

107.   NTOEC 's brief is to design and deliver teaching and learning programs in distance mode. Students are provided with resources, most of which are text based, but increasingly are being provided online with Janisons Tool Box platform access through the LATIS server. Most urban and regional, and some remote students have regular communication with teachers by phone, fax, email, through the electronic classroom, telephone conferencing and mail. Additionally, full-time students have one or more residential schools during the year. NTOEC is now equipped with a facility for interactive distance learning (IDL) and is preparing to develop materials and to in-service teachers on using this facility.

108.   The review heard some positive comments about the content and delivery of NTOEC courses. Students liked the flexibility of distance learning, particularly how it allowed them to pace their learning. They also appreciated the good support offered by some teachers, especially the opportunities for *early intervention* and *one-to-one interaction*. The students enjoyed the residential schools as they gave them a much-needed opportunity to interact with their peers.

109.   There were respondents who commented on the inadequate intellectual integrity in the materials and were critical of the quality of the service. Many commented about the content driven nature of the courses with their emphasis on print materials. Parents and students also told the review that

there were problems with dispatch as the wrong materials have been sent out and sometimes they are not on time.

Students also said they had to ring some teachers for support because it was not always offered on a regular basis.

110.   An increasing number of NTOEC enrolments is Indigenous students in Community Education Centres (CECs) or remote schools. These students have a teacher supervising their work on the NTOEC materials, who is in turn supported by NTOEC teachers. NTOEC maintains that *considerable effort has gone into building and extending partnerships between teachers at NTOEC and those in community schools* to improve student learning outcomes. They said that since Term 3 of 2000 the satisfactory achievement rate of Indigenous students in NTOEC courses has increased from 16% to 52%. Staff at NTOEC told the review they have a *two-way mentoring role with teachers* or *a train the trainer approach* and that there is *potential for highly productive partnerships to develop.*

111.   Most teachers in remote communities who spoke to the review have a different view about the level of support they receive from NTOEC and the suitability of its distance learning model for Indigenous students. They believe that *the assistance NTOEC is able to provide at a distance is of limited value,* and that *to be truly effective NTOEC teachers need to spend more time in the field*. They assert distance education *can no longer be the mode of secondary delivery as student engagement is the key to outcomes.* A curriculum officer supported these views commenting that *teachers are not interested in NTOEC support – I'm gob-smacked at the criticism they receive. You can't teach Indigenous kids using a distance model. You need face-to-face.*

112.   A number of CECs are conducting pilot programs under DEET's Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy and are delivering courses at the school with some support from NTOEC. Again there were strong views about the efficacy of this support.

One CEC claimed *NTOEC needs to produce culturally appropriate materials,* while a teacher at another CEC commented

> *many of the older NTOEC units didn't cater for the ESL needs of Indigenous kids; they were not aimed at secondary level and the courses were not user friendly.*

In contrast, both CECs commented favourably about the level of support provided by Curriculum Services Branch, and the review was told of the strong support offered by staff from secondary schools in Darwin in setting up their programs. The focus in some of the work by teachers at NTOEC has shifted from the delivery of courses, to supporting teachers to deliver them. The evidence presented to the review in consultations and submissions suggests that some staff are unable to fulfil this function as effectively as their clients expect.

113. The review is of the opinion that the current policy that allows NTOEC to be the sole provider of secondary education in some remote areas needs to be revised. Indigenous students have many challenges to overcome in order to be successful secondary students and they need, as far as possible, a face-to-face delivery model and on site support. Many schools have sufficient secondary students to allow for two teachers, who could use a middle years approach to offer an integrated curriculum in the core learning areas. Teachers who are specialists in the other subject areas could be deployed in the regional centres to travel to these schools, much as the Music teachers are doing, to offer intensive blocks of learning in these subject areas.

114. As those students would no longer be enrolled in NTOEC, funding for these specialists would partly be accounted for from what is currently applied to the dual enrolment model. The remainder of the allocation would be generated from the number of students enrolled at the community. Nevertheless, there still may be schools in remote communities where there are insufficient student numbers to set up such a program. These students will still need access to courses through distance learning, and they will also need support from a supervising teacher on site.

115. Once secondary provision has been up and running for a while, there will be an increasing need to provide for Indigenous students in the senior years. Schools and precincts will require support to run enterprise and vocational learning or VET programs, with the help of VET coordinators and RTOs in the region who understand the needs of senior Indigenous students, particularly in terms of the levels of literacy and numeracy support required. This does not have to be delivered or managed by NTOEC. Some students might do NTCE subjects at the local school supported by some distance learning (as already happens at one remote school where students are doing both Open Access SA and NTOEC subjects), or a precinct might develop other provisions and pathways.

Support of teaching and learning and curriculum materials development

116. The review team came to a view that when open access schools have a combination of functions whereby they deliver tuition and offer support to staff more widely, they often struggle to fulfil them all effectively. There are tensions between providing system support and delivery, particularly in relation to client expectations. Both NTOEC and NTSOL are trying to fulfil a range of functions including the delivery of teaching (usually the core business of a school), the provision of teaching and learning support, and in the case of NTOEC, the development of curriculum materials. By contrast, NTMS and ASLC have continued to focus on the delivery of tuition and teaching in classrooms and there is strong support for their services.

117. In our view the support of teaching and learning and the development of curriculum materials should be performed by staff with appropriate skills and expertise. This is particularly important for the development of new curriculum materials and pedagogies for online learning. The NTOEC submission to the review agrees

> *Online courses offer the greatest potential for improved student learning outcomes…however, they will only be successful if the e-learning environment is managed strategically for efficient resource use and effective <u>educational</u> products. There is a critical need to maintain the pedagogic focus…(*rather than have*)…ICT 'heroes' prevail (*who are not experts in pedagogy or teaching).

The submission went on to say

> *The need for expertise beyond formula staffing levels, and for teacher professional development in the use of e-learning tools, raises resources and funding issues. Unlimited resources would lead to waste...so a strategic overview for DEET/NTOEC would seem to be essential at this stage.*

118. NTOEC is to be commended for its efforts to allow for this strategic approach to e-learning, which in the future will be a feature of learning in all schools, not just NTOEC. Nonetheless, to offer the best pedagogical and ICT expertise available and to prevent unnecessary duplication of functions, we believe this work is more appropriately the responsibility of curriculum and IT staff, as part of a new Teaching and Learning Support Division (see Chapter 11). Relevant NTOEC staff with the requisite online curriculum development skills should have the option to move to the new division.

119. The resources to develop effective materials for on-line learning and IDL are expensive and there is little point in the NT replicating work that has already been done in other states, particularly South Australia where they develop materials for courses in the senior years related to curriculum statements that are also used in the Territory. The Open Access Centre (OAC) in South Australia has an Online Media Unit that is already developing CD Rom and web-based materials to supplement their print based resources for these courses.

120.　Given the OAC program for Years 7-10 is based on the middle schooling practices outlined in Chapter 5, in that they offer an integrated curriculum, fewer different teachers and a focus on positive teacher student relationships it would make sense for DEET to negotiate access to this expertise and/or materials for use in Territory schools. Some changes may need to be made to these middle years courses to fit the Territory context and the NTCF but given that South Australia's curriculum for the middle years is based on essential learnings and key learning areas that are similar to those used in the NTCF, it is likely that DEET curriculum personnel could make the necessary adjustments. In our view, rather than continuing to operate a system separate from South Australia, there should be negotiations to establish a joint venture with SA to offer distance learning opportunities for the Territory using SA's strength in this field, yet making sure the provision fits the NT curriculum.

121.　Removal of the teaching and learning support functions would allow the NTSOL to focus on its core business, the delivery of quality teaching and learning to students. On the other hand, given the small numbers of staff in each of NTSOL, NTMS and ASLC, and that they all are providing a specialist teaching service, these schools should be combined to make the most efficient use of their resources. This school would service precincts in urban, regional and remote areas.

Future of the NT Open Education Centre

122.　If previous recommendations about precincts and the delivery of education to Indigenous communities are accepted, NTOEC will lose a significant proportion of its students. Distance education services would still need to be available to non-Indigenous and Indigenous students in isolated areas where there are insufficient numbers for a school, as well as to independent students, and to students in urban areas who because of illness or travel are unable to attend school.

123.　One option for NTOEC would be to leave it in its current facility with a reduced function and numbers. However, the review believes this would not be cost effective and would not necessarily resolve the issues that have caused the current level of dissatisfaction with its services. It would remain apart from, rather than be integrated with mainstream provision. Increasingly, with individualised learning programs there will be a blurring of what is seen as face-to-face teaching and what is a distance delivery mode. The structure must be there for the two to come closer together.

124.　Another option is to retain NTOEC to deliver Years 8–10 only, and link the students in Years 11 and 12 to the Open Access College (OAC) in South Australia who already deliver courses that are not available at NTOEC to senior students in the NT. Senior students would have access to a wider range of courses, as well as to a team of

professionally trained counsellors to assist in motivation, goal setting, time management and study skills, as well as to information about careers and tertiary entrance. However, provision would need to be made for residential schools and some special assessment tasks in Year 12 that require students to work with other students or a teacher. This could probably be arranged with the current senior colleges in the Territory.

125.   This is not a desirable option, however, as it would require young people who are taking all their studies by distance delivery to 'change horses in mid-stream' at the end of Year 10, and this could be a difficult transition. Probably more importantly, if Year 10 is to be a preparation for Years 11 and 12 as we are recommending, this preparation should occur as an integral part of the senior years program. Apart from these considerations, the reduction in student numbers would make operating the institution only for Years 8–10 cost-ineffective.

126.   Another option would be for NTOEC to become part of a learning precinct and be linked with other schools in the area. This would allow students in Years 7 to 10 to be attached to 'real schools' and increase the opportunities for residential schools with other students. Teachers could teach in both face-to-face and distance modes and trial the new pedagogies in both settings. Given the potential for online learning not just in distance education but in all schools, students would have the opportunity to engage in learning with their peers from larger centres and to interact with teachers who are involved in both face-to-face and distance learning. However, this option has the disadvantage of again separating the preparatory Year 10 from Years 11 and 12, and it would require additional resources to train teachers currently involved in face-to-face and distance delivery into the new pedagogies required of the different delivery modes. While it could be workable, this is not the optimal option.

127.   The best option in the review's opinion is for DEET to enter into a mutually beneficial arrangement with the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) for the OAC to provide for the whole of the distance education for Years 7 to 12 in the NT. The SA system is not fully cost effective because of the relatively small population it serves, and so it could assist both SA and the NT if a joint venture option were pursued. This would mean the phasing out of NTOEC by the end of 2005, and the re-deployment of its staff to other schools or precincts.

128.   The concept of a Learning Precinct, which allows for innovative educational solutions tailored to local circumstances, is designed to provide pathways to improvement in student outcomes regardless of their location in the Territory, and is therefore a central plank of this review's recommendations. As stated by the review's Reference Group

The real test of teacher effectiveness is student improvement. However, the varying contexts in which secondary education might be offered in the Territory make it inappropriate to come up with one-size-fits-all strategies.

129.   Nevertheless, while the structural changes being proposed by this review are considered to be critical to improving secondary education in the Northern Territory, the first priority for implementation of our recommendations will be schools coming together with each other and with DEET to coordinate changes relating to new pedagogical emphases, sharing best practice and expertise to make this their top priority for innovation. The formation of precincts is secondary to this, and while it is expected that the urban and regional precincts will be established by 2006 or earlier, the formation of some remote precincts could take many years to achieve, but should begin to evolve alongside these activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Learning Precincts

It is recommended that

13.   to develop the capacity of schools and precincts to meet the complex and varied educational, social and emotional needs of students, NT DEET
- make provision so that every secondary school has a counsellor or access to a counsellor to meet the social and emotional needs of students,
- make provision so that each learning precinct as it is established will have at least one psychologist experienced in working with young people
- make provision so that every secondary school has at least one careers adviser or access to careers advice, and require that these advisers lead the Pathways Mentorship program described in Chapter 5.

14.   the NT Government endorse the principle of Learning Precincts and support their introduction by
- providing for their establishment in legislation
- authorising a plan similar to that outlined in Chapter 7 for establishing their functions and operations
- requiring schools, within six months of the acceptance and publication of this report, to have completed initial discussions about which schools will join together, so that precinct development might then proceed through the phases outlined in Chapter 7

- supporting the establishment of each precinct with additional funds in the form of a Precinct Establishment Grant to cover development costs, paid annually, but contingent upon successful completion of each of Phases One to Three

- re-naming School Councils and re-defining their roles and responsibilities as contained in the Education Act.

15. to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of distance education for all students, NT DEET

- revise the policy whereby the NT Open Education Centre (NTOEC) is the registered provider of secondary education in some remote communities, so that those communities with sufficient numbers of secondary students can become the provider and run a secondary program in the core learning areas of English, maths, science and SOSE, based on the later middle years schooling approaches outlined in Chapter 5

- establish regional pools of specialist subject teachers, use resources from NTOEC as appropriate to service a region or a precinct's remote secondary schools

- consult with current stakeholders in distance education, and explore the feasibility of a joint venture with the SA Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), in order to develop a new model of open learning and distance education delivery in the NT that best meets the needs of secondary students

- make appropriate transitional arrangements to allow for uninterrupted learning of current NTOEC students so that they are not adversely affected by the closure of NTOEC and the implementation of the new model in 2006

- work with NTOEC staff to identify options for their redeployment to the various precincts or the new Teaching and Learning Support Division.

16. NT DEET move the teaching and learning support functions at the NT School of Languages (NTSOL) and the curriculum materials development functions at NTOEC to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division.

CHAPTER 7
ESTABLISHING LEARNING PRECINCTS

1.   The main thrust of this report is the strengthening of a learning culture within the Territory's secondary schools, primarily through a shift toward a pedagogical orientation, as described in Chapter 3. This means that the educational needs of young people in terms of how they learn, shift to centre stage. As a consequence of this, the ways in which these young people are grouped, the ways in which staff and other resources are acquired and utilised, the ways in which learning spaces and the people within them are organised, managed and governed, and the ways in which a whole range of decisions are made must align with this pedagogical orientation.

2.   To allow for the significant level of change required to plan for and establish learning precincts, the review team recommends staged implementation. This section of the report, then, is concerned with five matters
- identifying learning precincts
- processes for building precincts in a carefully stepped manner
- ways in which the various learning precincts could be managed and governed
- relationships between the various learning precincts, and
- relationships between government and the learning precincts individually and collectively.

Identifying Learning Precincts

3.   The move towards learning precincts in the NT should build on the existing relationships schools have with each other, such as geographic proximity, shared programs, shared history, or shared culture and language groups. The Central Land Council saw the value in

> *strategies that allow schools in communities that are connected through shared language and culture ties to meet and work out a combined approach to schooling.*

There are many initiatives that are being taken at this very moment, within and outside of education, that are creating alliances between communities and the schools within them, that should be the basis on which schools come together to make a precinct. These include the move to Regional Authorities for Town Councils, discussions about integrated services delivery to groupings such as the Warlpiri Triangle, and the Western MacDonnells group, and educational initiatives like the Arrernte Language Circles. Group Schools such as the one in the Katherine region are already substantially aligned, and one of these could quite easily be one of the first remote groups that could come together to form a precinct.

4.   While there will be generic features that apply to all Learning Precincts, no two will be the same in every way. Different arrangements will evolve because of different contexts, and the possibilities vary between urban, regional and remote schools and their communities.

Urban Learning Precincts

5.   It is anticipated that urban precincts can be formed relatively quickly, particularly in the more established areas of Darwin. The Palmerston and Rural area presents an early opportunity for an innovative approach, as the Northern Territory Government has made a commitment to the construction of additional secondary facilities in the area. The current Palmerston High School is at capacity, and there is predicted student growth in the town and the adjacent rural area. The form these new facilities will take has not been decided, although preferences have been expressed in some quarters for a senior secondary facility that is co-located with the Charles Darwin University (CDU) on its Palmerston campus.

6.   As the review team is of the opinion that Learning Precincts will offer the best educational service to secondary-aged young people, the construction of a senior secondary college on the Palmerston campus of the university would be in accord with our integrated services approach, and therefore has the in principle endorsement of this review. However, there are other options that could be suitable, for example the construction of a new 'model' middle school, with Palmerston High School becoming the Year 10-12 campus. Therefore decisions should not be made about this until discussions have been held with Palmerston High School and its community and also with Taminmin High School and its community, as these schools and the new educational facilities will form part of the Palmerston and rural precinct. Existing facilities would not need to be duplicated, as, under a precinct model, they would be able to be accessed by all students enrolled in the schools in the precinct.

7.   A Palmerston and Rural Learning Precinct could comprise Palmerston and Taminmin High Schools, and the new secondary education facility when it is completed, and they could join with some of the following primary schools: Adelaide River, Bakewell, Bees Creek, Berry Springs, Douglas Daly, Driver, Dundee Beach, Durack, Girraween, Gray, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Middle Point, Moulden Park, Woodroffe, and possibly with Batchelor and Jabiru Area Schools. It may be that some of these area and primary schools will wish to come together in a different grouping as a precinct consisting of outlying or remote schools. This will be a matter for early negotiation with DEET, and it would be up to the schools to come together with a proposal as outlined in the section of this chapter on remote precincts.

8.   As a starting point for the formation of Learning Precincts in the Darwin urban area, logical groupings that might be considered for these are

Darwin and Nightcliff High Schools join with the following primary schools: Stuart Park, Parap, Nightcliff, Larrakeyah, Alawa, Ludmilla, Jingili and Belyuen

Dripstone and Sanderson High Schools and Casuarina Senior College join with the following primary schools: Anula, Moil, Karama, Leanyer, Malak, Manunda Terrace, Nakara, Henbury School, Wagaman, Wanguri and Wulagi and Don Dale Education Centre.

Regional Learning Precincts

9.   Katherine and Nhulunbuy High Schools are the only secondary schools responsible for secondary education in their respective towns, and because of the size of the student populations they have little option but to be 7–12 comprehensive high schools. To enable them to accommodate the new stages of schooling, they should create 7–9 and 10–12 sub-schools within this arrangement. In each of these towns BIITE, CDU and a number of non-government agencies provide VET and other programs. It would be of significant benefit to students as a part of precinct building activity to examine existing infrastructure and resource availability beyond the school, with the intention to maximise use and formal collaboration between all agencies.

10.   Tennant Creek High School is the only secondary school in the town and again has little option but to remain as a Years 7–12 comprehensive high school, but it should also create 7–9 and 10–12 sub-schools. As is the case for Nhulunbuy and Katherine, the extent of provision in Tennant Creek could be enhanced through the development of formal arrangements with other education providers.

11.   Alice Springs currently has three government schools providing secondary education. Alice Springs and ANZAC Hill High Schools cater for students from Years 7-10, while Centralian College caters for students in Years 11 and 12. Centralian is an amalgamated TAFE and senior secondary college, and provides senior secondary education for students in Alice Springs. It has a long-standing arrangement with the two junior high schools to provide VET offerings for students. At the time of writing Centralian College is merging with the CDU, to take effect at the commencement of 2004. DEET and CDU are developing a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure senior secondary provision. Unlike other precincts, clause(s) will need to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding between the University and DEET to enable stages of schooling continuity in any precinct which includes Centralian College.

12.   As a starting point, logical groupings that might be considered for these regional precincts would be

    Katherine High School join with the following primary schools: Casuarina Street, Clyde Fenton, Katherine South, MacFarlane, Kintore Street School, Mataranka and Pine Creek

    Tennant Creek High School join with Tennant Creek primary school and other remote schools in the Barkly region

    Alice Springs and ANZAC Hill High Schools join with what is now Centralian College, under a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure continuity of the stages of schooling with CDU, and join with the following primary schools: Bradshaw, Braitling, Gillen, Larapinta, Ross Park and Sadadeen

    Nhulunbuy High School join with the Nhulunbuy Primary School and existing Arnhem remote cluster schools.

13.   As in the case of urban precincts, it should be noted here too that some of these schools might wish to come together in a different grouping as a learning precinct consisting of outlying or remote schools. This would be a matter for early negotiation with DEET, and it is up to the schools concerned to come together with a proposal as outlined in the next section.

Remote Learning Precincts

14.   Because of differing capacities and capabilities of remote schools and communities to govern and manage their affairs, implementation of the preferred model of learning precincts will have to be phased in, alongside necessary capacity and capability building within the future precincts.

15.   It is recognised that most remote schools may take some years before they become fully self-managing precincts, and that there will be interim stages along the way which gradually reinforce effective relationships and growing responsibilities for improving educational delivery.

16.   While remote schools will form part of precinct arrangements for DEET management purposes, their uniqueness in terms of geographical location, student population, levels of literacy and numeracy and the dysfunction of some communities in which they reside warrant that these schools be considered differently. There is much happening in remote Indigenous schools that was generated by the 'Learning Lessons' report, and by other initiatives such as the moves towards integrated services delivery that have been occurring both formally and informally.

17.   It is not the intention of this review to interfere with the planning and direction that are happening in some remote communities as a result of this, but rather to complement these emerging arrangements. DEET's Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy, for example, has the full support of this review team, the only proviso being that the approach should be adapted so that the rollout of secondary education focuses on provision at a precinct level rather than in individual schools.

18.   We envisage that a number of schools in these areas will join together on mutually agreed terms for the benefit of not only secondary education, but education and training in general for all members of the community. However, in relation to secondary education, the review team is concerned with anomalies in providing staff and infrastructure for secondary education delivery in very small communities, and with the fact that many of the current schools are not recognised by the Northern Territory Board of Studies (NTBOS) as secondary education providers (see Chapter 2). These obvious disparities need to be recognised and dealt with if students in these communities are to be given opportunities similar to those available for secondary students studying elsewhere in the Territory.

19.   As indicated in the preceding chapter, the review team has taken note of the Community Controlled Schools pilots, which may have the potential to inform change in other communities. Those schools and the people concerned with them at the community level might be well placed to lead the formation of a precinct in their group.

Staged implementation

20.   The Northern Territory is comprised of a range of communities that have widely diverging levels of ability to govern and manage their affairs, and so implementation of the precinct model of school organisation will need to be phased in, alongside necessary capacity and capability building within the groupings that are established.

21.   Those groups of schools and communities ready to form precincts will be supported and encouraged to do so as soon as practicable. Those that are not yet ready will be assisted to develop their capacity and capability to achieve precinct status in a set of defined stages. There will be different levels of support and professional development required by precincts at different phases of their development.

22.   This review has used the phases proposed by the Learning Lessons Implementation Steering Committee (LLISC) for the development of community-controlled schools as a model for the stages for establishing learning precincts.

23. Because it is possible that major stakeholders, for example some principals or community leaders, may be more focused on their own local constituency than on the greater picture of a collaborative whole, the review team recommends that the development and implementation of the precinct be led by an outside facilitator or consultant, an Interim Head of Precinct (IHoP), who does not have a pre-formed agenda, and with no direct responsibility for any one school. They can then be free to carry primary responsibility for the work.

24. The need for an integrated services or whole-of-government approach is crucial to the development of precincts. This needs to be a coordinated at two levels
- departmental: DEET should work with other government departments and services to develop a mechanism to generate plans and commitment to them, Territory wide
- delivery: those responsible for education (that is, within the proposed precinct) should work with local representatives or officers from other government departments and services, and with other community members, to develop a group or mechanism to manage local coordination. This group might also be concerned with enterprise development (obtaining funding for new activities, selling services, starting small businesses, and so on).

25. Once a basic set of partnerships is agreed upon by the schools and DEET working together, an initial implementation group should be formed consisting of relevant DEET staff working with the current principals of those schools, with community leaders and representatives of existing School Councils. This group will be responsible for Phase One of the implementation process as defined below, to prepare a plan, which can then be let out to tender for the engagement of a consultant or facilitator, or become the basis for a contract for the appointment of an IHoP. Four major phases are identified for the development of precincts.

26. Before a precinct can be finally formed as a self-governing entity, the process of consultation and development, followed through from Phase One to Phase Three, must result in a strategic plan for the new precinct that fulfils the principles and recommendations of this review, and is able to be approved by DEET on the following grounds
- educational validity, providing for dynamic and purposeful pedagogies
- feasibility, in terms of the resources available to the precinct
- maximum sharing, in the use of resources and facilities
- strong support, of the relevant communities and schools.
DEET will need to position itself to be able to provide the support required for precinct planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Phase One: Action planning and preparation

27.   A detailed precinct development plan is constructed. The role of DEET in helping to put together databases, profiles, inventories and costings will be crucial at this point. Key elements identified for Phase One include

- development of baseline school and community profiles, infrastructure audits and datasets, including a detailed assessment of the current capability and standards of the DEET-managed school programs in each community, and a full costing of current provision and the cost of implementing the precinct model, site by site. This profile should also address the current local provision of alternative programs designed to re-engage those young people who have disconnected from mainstream schooling. These programs may or may not be funded by DEET (for example, some may be run with Commonwealth funding) and thus this profile must identify how each of these programs relates to ongoing services and structures

- an analysis of existing resources with an assessment of those that can more effectively be directed to other purposes within the precincts by consolidating functions and eliminating duplication

- undertaking a community asset inventory[16] and a knowledge mapping exercise to assist in the establishment of resources for successful precinct development. These will identify existing human, physical and social resources and any gaps in these. The following groups should be targeted: parents; enterprise and industry; all volunteer clubs and associations; heads or local representatives of all local, NT and Commonwealth government agencies; universities and other public and private learning providers. A community learning plan would be developed in Phase Two based on these audits

- development of detailed community consultation project terms of reference and tender or contract briefs for managing Phases Two and Three

- development and implementation of a communication strategy, where staff, students, parents and the community can have input so they and DEET are kept fully informed of progress in precinct development

- design of an evaluation process for development of the precinct as a whole, modelled on one developed centrally by DEET. This is a process for evaluating progress towards building community capacity and capability to undertake increasing responsibility.

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[16] Standard procedures for this process are set out in regional and community development manuals such as Kretzman, J. & McKnight, J. (1993), *Building communities from the inside out.* ACTA Publications: Chicago.

Phase Two: Community consultation / information sharing

28.   This phase should commence within two to four months of completion of Phase One, subject to timing of the tender process to engage consultants or of the appointment of an IHoP. This phase will be led by the consultant, facilitator or IHoP working with the original planning group, and involves

- consultation and discussion with the school staff, parents and community leaders about the options for educational service delivery and pedagogies, including alternative programs, rationalisation and re-allocation of resources and for precinct organisation within their communities as a group. The discussion of options will need to be based on the profiles, audits and costings conducted in Phase One, in order for them to be realistic

- education of all school staff (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and DEET management about the implications of increased precinct responsibility for how they work together, and to build staff capacity to operate in a precinct environment

- consultation with relevant unions, local enterprises and businesses, other agencies and service providers about the implications of moving to a precinct model for those communities, and how they might all work together in an integrated services model

- development of a community learning plan based on the community asset inventory and knowledge map developed in Phase One. This plan would specify formal and informal learning paths for each group and how these would achieve the goals for the precinct over the implementation phase

- negotiation of a strategic plan for development of the precinct, including a social compact[17] between the precinct's interim governing body (who represent the community) and DEET, setting out the roles and responsibilities of both parties. It should include the agreed deliverables and outcomes and the funding levels for each year of the period of precinct development. It should also include the communities' responsibilities in terms of supporting student attendance, providing opportunities for work experience or extra training, sharing facilities or staff and ensuring an acceptable level of safety to school employees and students. Parents, the local town/community council or regional authorities and local industry or business should be given the opportunity to be part of the negotiations.

Phase Three: Capacity and capability building

29.   This phase should commence as soon as possible after commencement of Phase Two, and develop concurrently with Phase Two. This phase would also be led by the consultant, facilitator or IHoP, and involve

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[17] Compact: an agreement between two parties

- establishment of an interim precinct governing body, led by the consultant, facilitator or IHoP, which might be a group of the principals of all the member schools, representatives of School Councils and parents, together with community leaders, for example, those who are experienced or capable and available at the time and, for Indigenous communities, traditional Indigenous leaders
- negotiation with unions about staff arrangements, including arrangements for staff who do not wish or are unsuitable to stay in the schools under that particular precinct's model
- training for DEET staff who will have responsibility for developing and maintaining the relationship between DEET and the learning precinct's governing body, both in the interim, and when high levels of self governance are achieved
- implementation of the community learning plan developed in Phase Two, including training for potential precinct governing body members, particularly training in planning, financial management, governance and educational theory and practice
- negotiation of an agreed governance model and structure for delivery of education which will be implemented when sufficient capacity and capability have been built over time
- development and negotiation of a strategic plan that conforms with the recommendations of this review, and subject to the accountability systems outlined in Chapter 12.

Phase Four: Governance and continuing evaluation

30.   This phase commences on completion of Phase Three in each learning precinct, with the strategic plan and governance structures submitted to DEET for approval, as outlined above. Once such approval has been gained, a Head of Precinct is appointed, the precinct governance structure is implemented, and together they take responsibility for educational service delivery, making decisions at a local level and reporting to DEET. Completion up to Phase Three might occur very rapidly in some areas, particularly in larger town centres, but may take much longer in places where capacity and capability are at lower levels.

31.   Reports from the evaluation process agreed in Phase One might need to be provided bi-annually in the development phases (Two and Three above), until the learning precinct has established a viable operation. Once the precinct is fully established, strategic planning and evaluation will occur on a three yearly cycle. As part of precinct planning, schools will continue to plan their own activities within guidelines established by the precinct. The plans of schools will affect precinct plans, and *vice versa.*

Operation of precinct governance structures

32.   As indicated above in Phase Three of precinct development, each learning precinct is expected to develop a proposal for its own governance structure for approval by DEET. It will develop its own written constitution, standing orders and standard operating procedures that are appropriate to its circumstances. To assist precincts in this task, DEET should provide a variety of models from which they can choose. These models might, for example, suggest a certain number of members of any board that might be established, whether all or some should be appointed or elected, whether 'representation' or 'expertise/stake' might be better criteria for membership in different circumstances, whether co-option is likely to be viable, whether students may or may not be eligible for membership and so on. The review team believes that a constitution, at least, should be developed in collaboration with the precinct community, and that it should be approved by the Minister, as is the case for the current School Councils.

33.   A learning precinct's members will be in the best position to judge who will be most appropriate to lead them in carrying out their work, and this will be reflected in the constitution. Nevertheless, if there is to be a board or governing committee of some kind, the Chair should be elected by and from its membership. The review team recommends that the Head of Precinct should be the chief executive officer of the precinct, and therefore believes it is unlikely such HoPs would be eligible to stand for election to the post of Chair.

34.   Each governing body will be best placed to decide upon its structure to enable it to carry out its activities and appoint from its membership people responsible for such activities. Again, various models from which the precinct can choose should be available through DEET. Each governance structure will fund its operations from precinct resources. If there is a board or committee, it is likely that sitting fees and travel expenses will need to be funded in this way.

Responsibilities of precinct governance structures

35.   Governing bodies will be responsible for developing precinct plans at strategic and operational levels, and, these plans will determine the allocation of resources through the budgetary process. The plans and budgets would require DEET approval.

36.   The most important resource that can be brought to bear in the education of young people consists of the people who work with them. The particular balance of skills, attitudes, knowledge and the like required will differ from precinct to precinct. In particular, staff will need to align themselves with their precinct's goals. It is the review team's opinion that this alignment of staff will be achieved best if the each precinct can determine

its required staffing mix, select staff, deploy them, and manage their performance. Each learning precinct through its government structure, is best placed to determine its needs in regard to physical assets and should manage them as appropriate to precinct need, with its approved budget. Similarly, we believe each precinct, acting within guidelines established by DEET, should be responsible for broad issues to do with the curriculum and pedagogy in each of its schools.

37.   Choices concerning goals, human resources, asset management, curriculum and pedagogy are frequently very complex ones. The complexity is compounded when it is recognised that these choices must be acceptable to the community they serve. As a result, learning precincts should not make such choices without appropriate consultation, and what is acceptable consultation will differ from precinct to precinct, as local requirements are taken into account.

38.   Achieving effective outcomes depends on a combination of conditions. Real responsibility, authority and power go hand-in-hand with access to and control over financial resources. The review team's proposal to shift considerable responsibility, authority and power to the various precincts in regard to deploying staff, managing assets, deciding upon the focus for curriculum and pedagogy in the broad and so on will, therefore, eventually require a similar shift in access to and control over financial resources. That is, single line budget allocations should be made to the governance structure, which should be responsible for the proper use of the funds allocated to it.

Relationships between precincts

39.   It is not the intention of the review team to promote the creation of a series of learning precincts that are independent silos, interacting with Government or other systemic agencies but separately from each other. Ways in which a precinct intends to interact with other precincts, especially with those that share their geographic borders, should be reflected in their strategic and operational plans. We have also suggested the development of 'sister precinct' relationships between urban and remote precincts.

40.   The Heads of Precinct should meet on a formal basis with DEET at regular intervals. The purpose of these meetings is to provide input into the policies and strategic direction of the system. It could also be a forum for the sharing of information, discussion of system-wide issues and problem solving.

Relationships between DEET and precincts

41.   The establishment of learning precincts, with their responsibilities and authorities, through their governing structures to make many decisions regarding educational delivery and learning within their respective schools, will require changes in the responsibilities and authorities of DEET and in the way it goes about its business. The review team sees a 'new' DEET supporting rather than directing secondary education within the Territory, while nonetheless being responsible to the Minister for its high quality.

42.   Toward the ideal end of the spectrum, such support is most likely to involve the provision of guidelines to facilitate the work of the various precincts and school-based personnel. These guidelines will, for example, include those concerning pedagogical development, management of staff and facilities and school and precinct leadership and administration. Other forms of support will also be required, especially during early years of implementation and in those precincts that do not yet have sufficient capability to fulfil their responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner.

43   Support for development of the precincts will, in turn, require DEET to build its own capacities and capabilities to enable it to provide this support. Developments in this regard will require some re-structuring within DEET, and this is taken up in Chapter 11.

44.   DEET will have a significant role to play in assisting the various precincts in their interactions with the proposed Quality Services Agency (see Chapter 12). The nature of relationships that are developed between precincts and the Quality Services Agency are critical to success.

Links between the Quality Services Agency and the precincts

45.   It is envisaged that a Quality Services Agency will be established as an independent body that reports to the Minister for Education. The agency will have a role to monitor the quality of the processes and outcomes of the precincts.

46.   The precincts provide an innovative way forward that will allow young people to benefit from all the educational resources and other support services available in their region. They will promote smooth transitions between stages of education, and effective preparation for life beyond school, whether it be work, work and further study, of community participation in enterprise activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing Learning Precincts.

It is recommended that

17. to assist in the planning for learning precincts, NT DEET

- work with schools their communities and other relevant agencies to develop Learning Precincts as defined in this report according to the specific and different needs of urban, regional and remote areas

- when a particular set of partnerships is agreed upon, work with an initial implementation group to be formed, consisting of the current school principals and school community representatives, to prepare a plan for precinct development, following the phases outlined in Chapter 7.

- as a matter of priority, hold discussions with the Palmerston and Taminmin High Schools communities and the wider Palmerston and outer Darwin communities to determine the most appropriate option for the new secondary education facility in Palmerston, and that options considered be in accordance with the Learning Precinct model as outlined in this report

- as a matter of priority, hold discussions with the CDU so that the memorandum of understanding between DEET and the university regarding Centralian College is in accordance with the Stages of Schooling and Learning Precinct models

- work with its own schools and any non-Government schools that wish to be involved with a precinct, to establish individually negotiated Memoranda of Understanding about the terms of their participation.

18. to assist in the establishment of Learning Precincts NT DEET work with schools to

- implement the introduction of Learning Precincts through a staged process according to the four phases of precinct development as outlined in this report. The development of precincts should coincide with the movement of Year 7 into high school in the Top End, and with Year 10 consolidating with Years 11 and 12 at the same time, planned for 2006

- adopt as guidelines for precinct development and implementation the advice provided in this chapter about the responsibilities and operation of learning precinct governance structures, about relationships between precincts and between them and NT DEET, and about links between the Quality Services Agency and the precincts.

CHAPTER 8
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

All young Territorians should be able to achieve mainstream educational outcomes.

It is a right for all young Territorians to have access to quality, affordable education and training, no matter how difficult this may be to deliver.

The Territory values Indigenous languages and culture, and the desire of Indigenous people to preserve, maintain and participate fully in that culture.

Effective learning for all young people of the Territory can develop fully in schools only when neglect, violence, substance and sexual abuse, and other forms of antisocial behaviour are no longer tolerated in the community.

1.   This chapter is concerned with Indigenous secondary education and the challenges and complexities it presents. On the one hand we have ostensibly equal access but divergent outcomes for Indigenous students in urban and major regional centres, on the other, we have overwhelmingly poor access and negligible outcomes in our remote areas. We are faced with an expanding student cohort and an increasing incidence of refusal, disengagement and disruptive behaviours that impact far beyond the school grounds. In this section the review team paints the current picture of secondary education provision and attempts to unpack the legacy of the varying historically situated roles of Indigenous education, and to suggest strategies forward, and we discuss how the cultural diversity in our Indigenous communities shapes the identities, values and aspirations of young Indigenous peoples.

2.   The review has already made a series of recommendations that will contribute to improved attendance and learning outcomes for secondary aged Indigenous young people. A particular focus is to encourage the secondary-aged Indigenous people who are not currently attending school to enrol. Recommendations concerning the stages of schooling, the reorganisation of schools into learning precincts and the revision of the current policy whereby NTOEC is the registered provider of secondary education in most remote communities are designed to increase opportunities for Indigenous young people to have improved access to secondary education. These changes will enable schools in remote communities, that have sufficient numbers of students in Year 7 or beyond, to offer a middle years program with teachers onsite delivering core subjects and a pool of teachers available in the regions to deliver the other subject areas. In addition, the proposed changes to teaching and learning will allow Indigenous

young people to receive a high quality education that is challenging and relevant to their life experiences, as well as accounting for their individual learning needs.

3.   The review team has taken note of numerous recent reports into the state of Indigenous education in the Territory, including the Learning Lessons report (Collins and Lea, 1999) and Taking Control (Boughton, 2001) and propose recommendations that build on the best and enhance other current DEET initiatives that are under way. We recognise and value the depth and breadth of the stakeholders in Indigenous education, and consistent with our overall approach, have put students at the forefront of our thinking and proposals.

4.   In this section we look at the models and practices of current education provision and how young Indigenous people are, or are not, being prepared for educational success. We consider the role of language and culture in our schools. We address issues relating to the capacity and capability of our teachers and learners, and how we nurture family and community ties. The review team has also investigated how the services, resources and infrastructure of education do or do not meet the changing needs and cohorts of our Indigenous student population. Most importantly, we have extended this analysis to enable links with both whole-of-government approaches and emerging models of integrated service delivery, particularly for our remote regions. We consider strategic approaches to address the 'constancy of mobility' and to achieve transparency and mutuality of accountability measures.

5.   In remote areas of the Territory, where the locus of education provision is the community itself, the review team has focused on the whole of education provision rather than just secondary, recognising that in these contexts the transitions, pathways and provisions of education services must not be further hampered by sectorial approaches.

The current situation

The educational picture for our young Indigenous people

6.   Indigenous students currently comprise 32% of the secondary school population, with predictions of a substantial increase in the 14–19 age group by 2016 (Taylor, 2002). However, DEET enrolment and attendance data, ABS data, as well as evidence from consultations and submissions and the literature (Collins, 1999; Boughton 2001) revealed that significant numbers of young Indigenous people of secondary do not participate in education at all, and those who do are often disengaging by Years 8 or 9 in urban areas and even earlier in remote regions (see Chapter 2). In the major townships there is a diversity of secondary education provision in which they might participate. This includes comprehensive, and junior and senior high schools, non-government schools that may also have boarding facilities, one government boarding facility

and varying sites of alternative provision. While Indigenous students are attending most Territory schools, there are distinct concentrations of Indigenous students and in some areas, such as Alice Springs, there are diverging enrolment patterns between government and non-government secondary schools which resonate as a racial divide, with much lower proportions of Indigenous young people in non-Government schools not specifically established for them. In spite of the diversity of educational provision in Alice Springs, the Taking Control (2001) report estimated there are anywhere between 150 to 250 secondary-aged young people who normally live in Alice Springs who are not participating in education.

7.   Across the remote regions of the NT there are 40 schools delivering some form of education to secondary-aged students. There are also a few non-government schools and two independent Indigenous boarding schools. In many areas there is no provision of secondary education. Where there is government provision, some occurs in Community Education Centres (CECs), some in Area Schools and some in Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs). Most of these participate in the dual enrolment system and utilise courses and support provided through the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTEOC). A few continue to use the Foundation and General Studies courses, originally conceived as a bridge to mainstream. There are few qualified secondary teachers in remote areas and curriculum offerings tend to be limited to English and maths supplemented by sporadic VET programs and other activities depending on the luck of the submission to government agencies for support. Of the 83 Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEP) in the NT only one is located in a remote school. Many students also leave their remote communities to go to boarding school whether or not there is any local secondary education provision, in the hope of getting a 'better' education. Most do not stay away for more than a year. The issues relating to boarding schools will be taken up later in this chapter.

8.   In remote areas, secondary provision, most often called post-primary, is tied structurally and in terms of resources and funding allocations to primary education. This association was consistently identified by review respondents as problematic, particularly where the provision, pedagogy and intent of 'post primary' education had not been demarcated clearly from that of primary education. The review team received many comments regarding the need for young people of secondary age to be treated as adults, for there to be separate provision for young men and women, and for the content and pedagogy of their learning environments to respect their cultural learnings and emerging status as adults.

9.   Despite a few very positive examples of appropriate secondary education provision for Indigenous young people in discrete locales, the overall picture is grim. Issues of poor attendance, inadequate or inappropriate teaching practices, anti-social behaviour, classroom

disruption, trauma and neglect were frequently cited by parents, teachers and students in consultations and submissions as reasons for the poor performance of many Indigenous students in secondary programs. As stated by one Indigenous educator

> *We are going backwards because of the many social problems. The parents are into drinking and gambling and their children make their own choices but they don't recognise any boundaries. It needs a holistic approach.*

The consistent challenge for schools was whether to 'fit' these young people into the system through bridging programs, attempt to address the ever widening gap in achievement through withdrawal practices, or to remove them altogether by suspension or letting them 'vote with their feet'.

10.   It is the review team's view that both change and increased investment in teaching and learning must occur. However, it is also our view that the necessary change and investment cannot occur just within the 'silo' of education but also needs to be in partnership with broader strategies and approaches that are beginning to emerge. These are designed to support thriving regions and communities, pathways to employment, improved livelihoods and enterprising economic activity, strong governance and closer to the ground decision making regarding the provision and nature of essential services, including education. To this end we have put forward the concept of Learning Precincts, which were discussed fully in Chapters 6 and 7.

Issues impacting on education provision

11.   The settlement patterns of remote Indigenous Territorians are decidedly different from those of other Territorians and other Australians. There are nine Indigenous communities with populations between 1 000 and 2 000 (all in the Top End), 50 communities with populations between 200 and 999, and the majority of Indigenous people are resident in some 570 small and dispersed communities of 50 people or fewer across some of the most remote and climatically harsh landscapes in Australia (Taylor, 2003; Walker, 2001). Indigenous people have responsibility for more than half of the land base, in terms of rights of use for traditional purposes; however, they are frequently the poorest people in Australia (Yunupingu, 2003). Indigenous people make up 25% of the adult population in the NT but have only 11% of the income (Altman, 2003).

12.   Frequent mobility of residents within regions, and between regions and major towns is also a prominent characteristic across the NT. These patterns of settlement and movement, to an extent moulded through the histories of rations, missions, protectionism, assimilation and self determination, intersect with complex and enduring systems of language, obligation and affiliation to kin and country. This has resulted in considerable diversity of needs and aspirations amongst Indigenous peoples and groups.

13.   Since the beginning of government education provision during the 1950s, decisions about schools have been formulated at the top, but enacted on a community-by-community level. These decisions have presumed permanent student/family domicile within the community, teacher availability and sustainable governance structures of schools and councils. This construction of the discrete community as the most valid social structure of Indigenous peoples dismisses the enduring reality that they always have moved, and will continue to move, socially, culturally and economically across a series of overlapping and interconnected regions (Ah Kit, 2003).

14.   The geographic spread and small size of these communities present great difficulties for effective service provision, including provision of education. The evidence before the review team suggests that maintaining enrolment numbers in the face of shifting student populations, sustaining parent and community engagement with the school, even in terms of cultural transmission, and maintaining resources and infrastructure, raises questions about the 'community' as the most viable locus for decisions about educational service delivery. In many sites, the reality of increasing community dysfunction places further strains on sustaining education services.

15.   The review team notes the moves of the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs (DCDSCA) towards regional approaches to service delivery as identified in their Stronger Regions, Stronger Futures Strategy (2003). There are links between what we are suggesting regarding ways of organising educational service delivery, and emerging regional models, that should be expanded to support capacity building and sustainable futures for Indigenous peoples. For example, the emerging focus on developing new regional governance structures that more authentically represent families and clans across regions rather than a community, and enable a focal point for decisions about service delivery, could also serve to enhance education services as well as the management of these. The excessive and burdensome accountability and reporting requirements for each program of funding additional to core educational services could well be addressed through a more streamlined and 'one stop shop' conduit for distribution within identified regions.

16.   Mobility of students is also a critical issue for town schools. Increasing numbers of Indigenous people are resident both permanently and periodically in the major towns of the Territory, including in town camps. One Year 8 teacher in a regional high school commented that *one quarter of the students turned over four times per year,* that is, a quarter of the students in the class were new in each of the four terms.

17.   While some secondary schools in the major towns report Indigenous enrolments of up to 45% of total enrolments, the cohort is focused within the junior secondary years and decreases by Year 9 or 10. In 2002 there were 78 Indigenous students undertaking the NTCE in Years 11 and 12 and only 52 of these completed, representing 6% of the total number of Year 12 students eligible to complete the Certificate. These are quite small numbers given that 32% of the secondary cohort are Indigenous. The reasons for such low retention rates are multiple and complex. For some students it is lack of access, for others it is insufficient literacy and numeracy skills, and for many issues such as poor health, substance abuse and a lack of family support combine to make attendance at school problematic. The Taking Control Report (2001, p.22) suggests *a fundamental lack of fit between the school system and the needs of aspirations of its Indigenous clients* underlies these poor retention rates. For many young people, school is a pastime until the age of 10 or 12, marked from the beginning by poor attendance and achievement, and largely irrelevant and not proper in structure and design once they become young men and women.

18.   Alternate models of educational provision for those disengaging or refusing mainstream education have emerged but many struggle to sustain themselves. The Yarrenyty-Arltere Learning Centre at Larapinta Valley town camp, for example, is an initiative in alternative education for 'at risk' young people. Its set-up was supported by the Commonwealth, and currently it is struggling to continue as ongoing funding is not readily forthcoming. There is also a need to formally evaluate these models of alternative provision to determine the extent to which they improve educational and social outcomes for secondary students (Boughton, 2001).

19.   Many schools with large numbers of Indigenous students have to devote significant amounts of their effort and energy to behaviour management, withdrawal programs and remediation rather than teaching and learning. A comment heard often by the team and certainly of some concern to many teachers was that the least skilled and supported of the school staff often supported the most at risk and educationally needy students.

20.   In many areas, but particularly remote, the review team doubts that what is being delivered meets acceptable criteria for secondary education. We saw watered down or ungraded curricula with examples of busy-work and low expectations of young people due to their poor attendance and 'lack' of English literacy and numeracy skills. In some instances, there was a strong demand for *mainstream* rather than *special* curriculum. There were good examples of dedicated teachers trying to do the best for students, and parents desperate to see their children succeed, but overall the picture is disheartening.

21.   Where VET courses were being trialled there were some successes but they were easily dismantled through lottery-like funding regimes and minimal pathways to enterprise or employment. As one community-based education worker commented

> *We live and die on the goodwill of DEET and they froze all their funding in February, so there's been no driver training in the community at all. At this stage we're still waiting for the official story. The irony is they'll probably get it flowing in July and there'll be no students!*

22.   The prevalence of substance abuse, and the increasing numbers of very young mothers highlight the fact that there is an urgent need to re-frame education to address the realities of young people and their health, social and personal problems (Boughton, 2001; Central Australian Regional Indigenous Health Planning Committee [CARIHPC], 2001). It has been documented in recent reports about Indigenous education (Collins 1999, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002; HREOC, 1999; MCEETYA, 2001) that educational provision to remote communities of Indigenous people is very much embedded in the increasingly social and emotional dysfunction that forms the fabric of daily life. Two generations of passive welfare dependency, ongoing and chronic health problems and escalating patterns of addiction (alcohol, gunga, petrol) overlay a dynamic and changing composition of cultural, kin and language practices of the 'traditional' culture. Communities are complex ecologies of language, affiliation and hybrid economies (welfare, gambling, royalties, work, small enterprise, art and so on) presenting with stressed physical infrastructure and marked by poverty, and often despair. What was also apparent was the onslaught of a plethora of often uncoordinated if well-intentioned programs and services across sectors of government and private enterprise, which have the unintentional effect of adding considerable burden to local governance structures, including schools and their staff, with seemingly little sustained impact (Pearson 2001).

23.   Based on the results of national benchmark tests (see Chapter 2), the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in the NT through the primary years of schooling are demonstrably poor. It has been emphasised earlier in this report that outcomes for Indigenous students must improve if they are to have any chance of succeeding in secondary education. Additionally, the transition to secondary schooling, with its emphasis on learning content rather than on the process of learning, is a huge hurdle for most young Indigenous people. We were nevertheless heartened by some concerted efforts being undertaken on some communities. For example, rather than blaming poor literacy and numeracy skills, or 'culture' as reasons for not pursuing rigour in secondary education, the teachers and principal at one CEC, supported by the community, have lifted expectations dramatically. Instead of adhering to a lock step approach to literacy and numeracy development they are using applied learning and ICT to support students' literacy and numeracy learning at age-appropriate levels. The school principal commented

To us the secondary program starts in Transition. You must start with high expectations and sustain them throughout the primary and secondary years.

24.   Effort and improved outcomes by young Indigenous people should be celebrated. Yet such success can seem hollow when the transition from school to 'what' looms as large for those in remote regions who do well as for those who disengage. One of the most repeated comments from Indigenous parents and elders was the need to *stop petrol* and do something about *boredom. The young people have nothing to do.* The team consistently heard comment from parents about the need for their 'kids' to be literate and numerate in English, to have jobs and employment on their communities. Pockets of intensive effort and dedication by teachers exist, but it was apparent that only where there was systemic change at the whole school level, a willingness to re-invent the nature of classroom pedagogy and practice and develop proactive linkages to community, youth, health and employment services, was the challenge being transformed into an opportunity for both students and teachers.

25.   The review team observed that increasing numbers of young people were being sent away by their families to boarding schools across the Territory and even interstate, as a means to divert them away from an induction into boredom and dysfunction. The main reasons were for them to be away from substance abuse and for their learning to continue. In many instances we found that parents and community members had little understanding of the 'real' levels of achievement of young people upon completing primary schooling, or an understanding of the level at which they would be working at a high school. The boarding school pathway through secondary schooling is only proving partly effective. Both parents and young people themselves spoke of these issues, as the comment below indicates

Over the years we've had heaps of kids go away to boarding school but sending them away hasn't helped at all. A lot drop out. They are either too homesick or the work is too hard for them. They might get into fights or they might get teased.

The issue of boarding schools will be further discussed in a later section in this chapter.

26.   The review team frequently received comments, from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that many of those schooled in the 'mission' days, or those taken away, are the people who are the most literate, numerate and orally proficient in English and often may be the only ones so skilled on their communities. This seems a simplistic view, with a trade-off between literacy and numeracy and trauma taking a long time to resolve.

27.   There is no doubt that the regimes of community life were also decidedly different during the mission days. Indigenous people educated in those times also spoke of school as places of hunger, fear and punishment operating within a structure of strict controls around what Indigenous adults and children could and could not do (Cummins, 1990). Movement was

restricted, awareness of the outside world very limited. The missions have been described as cocoons of attempted conversion, smoothing pillows[18] and 'saving' the young by enforcing educational participation in ways unacceptable today.

28.   More recent educational policies have enabled a place for language and culture in schools in the Territory. The handing back of significant tracts of land and sea to Indigenous peoples and the associated 'back to country' movements have supported a range of Indigenous organisations. Diverse and growing service provision has provided at least a minimal economic safety net through welfare support payments. However, such policies have also effectively locked many Indigenous people out of the 'real' economy (Pearson, 2001).

29.   Currently 60% of total Indigenous income is from welfare payments (Taylor, 2003). These policies have co-existed and perhaps unwittingly aided a gradual demise and escalating social crisis for Indigenous communities. It is arguable that the current ways of being inclusive of traditional languages and cultures in education, or in governance structures, have not stopped the negative effects of cultural change and have not assisted in improving economic and social conditions for Indigenous people.

30.   There is a pressing need for Indigenous people to negotiate explicit ways of engaging with what education is for and to then move towards an educational provision based on mutual respect and a balance of rights and responsibilities. Given the diversity of Indigenous peoples and ways of living, these negotiations must be enacted locally. An elder in one Indigenous community commented

> *Parents need more education about the whitefella's way of education, about attendance and curriculum. You have to spend some time teaching parents and explain why kids need schooling.*

Capacity may at this stage be tenuous but there is a need for a partnership as opposed to a supplier/consumer approach; that is, where mutually enacted agreements spelling out rights, responsibilities and performance outcomes for educational services are explicitly and jointly negotiated, and the services are supplied on the basis of these rather than provided and measured against outcomes far removed from the users of that service (Cunningham, 2003). Only then can education capture its role in enabling the aspirations of individuals and families, rather than enabling the providers to look and act culturally appropriate.

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[18] This comment refers to a belief, popular in the early 20th Century and heavily influenced by social Darwinism, that 'primitive' peoples such as Australia's Aborigines, would in effect die out as the struggle for the 'survival of the fittest' progressed. The euphemism "smooth the pillow of a dying race" is drawn from writings by Dame Daisy Bates.

Issues of pedagogy and purpose

Respect is a little word with a big meaning

31.   The above statement from an Indigenous educator echoes our focus on mutual respect as a core component for effective teaching and learning practices. As outlined in Chapter 3, the most important factor in student performance is the quality of teaching and learning and the relationships it entails. Where we have a cohort of students entering secondary school with

- minimal fluency in English language
- a fragmented primary school experience
- significant health problems
- home environments where their education can not be adequately supported
- few positive role models
- the reality of school and school achievement as peripheral to daily life and future expectations

the quality of teaching and learning becomes absolutely critical, and very challenging, to deliver.

32.   The reality for many young people is that English is a foreign language or a different dialect, where school 'work' is the main and often the only context for speaking, listening, reading and writing English. The living practices and expected ways of 'being' young people within schools may differ dramatically from the rest of their lives. Put all this together and we have a situation where educational pedagogy and purpose must not only be explicit and rigorous but must also push the comfort zones of mediocrity and implicit deficit models.

One teacher put it this way

Struggling students are labelled as poor achievers from when they arrive in high school, with the majority of these students being Indigenous. They are viewed as deficit and the expectation of these students is much lower even by the most well-intentioned teachers. These students can only access different curriculum, special programs and withdrawal groups for their learning needs.

As this quote would suggest, many of our young Indigenous people are faced with not only being labelled as 'different' because of their language, culture or appearance, but where such difference interacts with the systems and practices of Western culture, this 'difference' tends to align with being viewed as deficient.

33.   As pointed out in Chapter 3, there has been some debate amongst educators about the need for a particular set of pedagogies to cater for Indigenous learning styles. One of the seminal works on Indigenous pedagogy was Harris' (1980) research into Indigenous learning styles. Harris argued that Indigenous people learn in different ways from non-Indigenous students; they learn from observation and imitation rather than from verbal instruction, they use trial and error to practise new skills and they learn from real life experiences rather than in

artificial settings. Many Indigenous educators have embraced Harris' work; however, others are sceptical claiming learning styles theory offered an excuse for the poor educational achievements of Indigenous students, while ignoring the social and economic disadvantages that impede their learning. They also argued that Harris' reductionist view presents Aboriginal and non-Indigenous belief systems and learning styles as mutually exclusive and oppositional and his research cannot be applied to the diversity of Indigenous groups across Australia (DETYA, 1997; Stewart, 2002).

34.   More recent literature (Hughes, 1997; Stewart 2002) asserts that while there are some learning approaches which are more likely to occur among Indigenous students, there is no single set of Indigenous learning styles. Moreover, although students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) may have preferred learning styles, most students use a combination of approaches when learning. While an awareness of these preferred learning styles can be helpful when planning and delivering lessons for Indigenous groups, knowledge about individual learning styles must take precedence. It is important to avoid using learning styles to stereotype Indigenous students, and teachers must take into account the wide variations amongst individuals in any cultural group.

35.   Gray's (2003) scaffolding approach to teaching literacy is currently being trialled in the NT in pilot schools in urban, regional and remote areas through DEET's Accelerated Literacy Project. Early results from these schools indicate Indigenous students, particularly older students, have made significant improvements in their reading literacy levels. The most recent report on the project states that, *on average, those students who have joined the scaffolding literacy teaching programs…have gained almost 2 year levels in reading per year of actual schooling*. Given the success of these strategies, the review supports the expansion of this project and its pedagogies. We also believe that the recently developed School for Social Research and Policy at Charles Darwin University (CDU) can play an important role in working with teachers using an action research model to develop, trial and evaluate new pedagogies for Indigenous students.

36.   There is much documented evidence (Rose, 2003) that despite more than 20 years of curriculum changes, policies and practices of inclusivity and new methods of teaching and learning, our school system continues to produce outcomes for students that reflect the stratified social system of the old economy. That is, we have 10-20% moving through to higher education, 20-30% moving through to VET and vocational learning, and the remainder either finding unskilled work or joining the unemployment queues. For too many of the Territory's Indigenous people the latter option remains the most likely. Welfare or Commonwealth Development Employment Program (CDEP) payments comprise more than two thirds of

Indigenous income in the Territory with only 16% of Indigenous people employed in the mainstream, a figure that seems to be steadily dropping (Taylor, 2003).

37.   In the Territory there have been significant changes to curriculum over the past ten years and pockets of intensive effort regarding teaching methods and practice. However, much of the debate has centred on appropriate learning styles, bilingual as opposed to tuition in English, recruiting, retaining and training teachers, special education, behaviour management and attendance. While these are very important micro issues to do with school functioning and student outcomes, the debate is noted for its overall lack of engagement with the broader or macro issues that impact on educational outcomes.

38.   If education is currently moving the majority of our Indigenous people through to 'nothing', it is more than time that the provision of education services, particularly secondary, becomes driven by the goals of enterprising action and an aspiration to viable social and economic futures. Such goals explicitly incorporate the means to enable the social change process required to build sustainable capacity across the regions of the NT. The Taking Control report (2001, p.44) supports this position, claiming *not only does education greatly increase an individual's chance of employment, it is also absolutely essential for the community's capacity to maintain a functioning economy.*

39.   The incorporation of enterprise and vocational learning as a core aspect of teaching and learning for the new territory has been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. For young Indigenous people living in vast and remote landscapes, such a pedagogical shift is paramount. Not only was the need to focus on the pathways that education could open up repeated in almost every consultation, so also was the need for young people to learn *what work means.* Yet these concepts are often alien to the realities and role models around them. There is also a need for VET training to lead to productive outcomes, so it is important to develop programs in accordance with both community aspirations and local employment and enterprise opportunities. The Taking Control report (2001, p.44) believes this will lead to *VET being seen as of value in its own right, not a lesser option.*

40.   To say that this is no easy task is trite. Opportunities for social and economic participation must be created, as few currently exist. The issue of grants to establish enterprises in local communities is explored in more detail in Chapter 10. Teachers will have to be at the forefront of enabling innovative and practical applications of enterprise learning. These can then be supplemented where possible by VET programs. Teacher training programs that prepare people to do this are rare.

The role for Indigenous languages and culture

41.   Schools are sites of cultural transmission. Beginning with learning the communicative tools and practices of the school, literacy and numeracy, students progress 'logically' to secondary schooling, where they learn a range of subjects and the literate ways of thinking and doing within each subject. While this natural progression of schooling is being challenged Australia wide, nowhere is the challenge of providing effective English as a second language instruction to native born Australians more sharply defined than in the NT.

42.   During the past 30 years or so there has been a concerted attempt to graft Indigenous knowledge and communicative practices onto school practices as a means to value their heritage, increase relevance and promote Indigenous ownership and control. There is much evidence to suggest that practical measures to value the knowledge capital and identity of our Indigenous young people are critically important to improving outcomes. While the Indigenous Languages and Culture component of the NTCF offers schools the opportunity to include studies of Indigenous culture and languages in the curriculum and Indigenous learning is a cross curricula perspective, some students and parents commented in consultations that there was insufficient Indigenous content in school courses.

43.   On the other hand, we saw many examples of strong Indigenous school councils and committed Indigenous teachers trying to support their students' understanding of their place in both cultures. We also saw examples where bush tucker excursions and football were so prominent that the young people, although attending well, were engaging in little formal learning. These were the contexts where 'culture' was so much the focus of schools that mainstream educational outcomes were increasingly diluted. That Indigenous peoples have a right to practise and maintain their traditions and languages is not in question. The role schools should play in this task is a matter that requires further examination.

44.   How do we move beyond what is in essence the mainstream's 'cultural cringe' and turn the lens forward to enable young people and their families to negotiate the interface of traditions and futures, including those possible and viable within communities and regions as well as in urban centres? How can being a 'traditionally enriched' Indigenous Territorian *not* negate educational achievement or be a sentence to welfare dependency? Building on the Collins report implementation strategy and the current Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy, the review team would aim for a practical consolidation of ways to value Indigenous knowledge capital and role models and mentors across school learning, while also working towards enhancing young Indigenous people's ability to operate effectively in Western domains. This should include rigorous support for the transitions of schooling, including the critically important post-school pathways to livelihoods, enterprise or employment activities, as well as enacting

targeted early intervention strategies for those at risk. A requirement by elders for young people to reach a certain level of achievement at school before they can be initiated into manhood and womanhood is a potential strategy that could be taken up with communities.

45.	Most learning environments in remote areas of the Territory – primary, secondary and adult – are contexts of multi-lingual and multi-dialectical practices. Young Indigenous people there will almost certainly speak a language other than English as their first language, most will speak the primary language of the community as their first but there will also be some whose first language may be a related language, for example, one of the Western Desert languages, or another discrete language. Some will speak Kriol and all will have varying fluency in Aboriginal English.

46.	With greater exposure to the outside world and the pervasive engagement with the various media, young people *are* developing skills in a range of 'Englishes' appropriate to the differing contexts and relationships of their environments. In essence, these are contexts of complex language ecologies, that are largely oral and graphic and where literacy in the sense of print is more often than not limited to school-based practices. Overall opportunities for English language use are usually very limited, and many young people expressed *shame* about their English language skills, which they come to realise are hard to understand in mainstream society. They did tend to use English more readily where they were engaged in collaborative activities, with shared purpose. As one student commented, *I like going on excursions where we have to try out our English and we all help each other out.*

47.	Bilingual, or two-way schooling, has been the most formal attempt to work with these complex language ecologies of communities. There are currently 12 government schools in the Territory that are part of the Two-way Learning Program and a smaller number of independent schools are also participating. The two way model attempts to explicitly value Indigenous languages and traditions as equal in the learning environment and is thus staffed and resourced differently from other schools. It is also premised on instilling a literate orientation to learning through Indigenous language first followed by English and to this end has been dependent on Indigenous adults or dedicated long term teachers or teacher linguists, with vernacular literacy skills and access to avenues for developing literacy resources. Its realisation as an effective pedagogical approach also arguably depends on both vernacular and English literacy practices becoming *a way of being* within the community, so that immersion in and use of these practices can reinforce and support educational activities. As one teacher stated
	What do they need to read and write their language for, when for many it isn't even their language and there isn't anywhere to use those skills?

48.   The evidence before the review team would suggest that there are few examples of vernacular or English literacy practices integrated within community life and two-way schools are currently struggling with their endeavour as much as other schools. This may not have been the case in the past, but current reality appears quite stark. In a number of schools with two way learning both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers were concerned about their students' abilities to read and write in English. A non-Indigenous teacher commented

> *All teaching is done in the local language until Year 4. Sometimes it's not even the kids' first language. It's impossible to get the students up to benchmark by Year 7 and prepare them sufficiently for secondary education.*

This is not to question the value of languages but to suggest that all schools in remote areas, not just those designated two-way, and many in urban areas, operate in multi-lingual contexts and all teachers must have the capacity and capability to negotiate these. There is a need to recognise the diversity and dynamics of local language ecologies and practices and use these as the stepping-stone for productive pedagogical practice.

49.   In essence, a language ecology approach would enable a focus for the professional development of all staff that is premised on the recognition of the existing language skills of students and the social practices of their environments. It would also allow an explicitness in teaching and learning practices based on rigorous recognition of what are and will be the difficulties experienced by students, as well as the means to utilise existing social practices of language use and expand on these. These approaches to English language and literacy learning are integral to the pedagogical transformations recommended in this review.

50.   We therefore suggest that there are a number of critical issues for educational endeavours operating in multi-lingual contexts. There is a need to
- focus on the relationships in teaching and learning between young Indigenous people and their teachers
- develop locale specific linguistic and intercultural understandings of the difficulties faced by young Indigenous people in learning Standard Australian English
- match language programs and literacy tasks to the contemporary situations of young people
- align the goals of education towards the repeatedly expressed goals of community members to achieve self determining post colonial regions with social and economic futures
- build the future capacity of Indigenous people to negotiate effectively at the interface of the range of traditions and ways of life.

51.   Many family and community members as well as teachers, spoke of the importance of two-way approaches to learning and the importance of these to achieving successful mainstream

outcomes for young people. Some spoke of how young people are *forgetting their culture* or *don't feel connected* because of the explosion of violence and dysfunction. Most spoke convincingly of the need for *young people to see themselves as the next school teacher or principal* and the critical importance of post school pathways on the community.

52.   Most schools in remote areas have over time assumed a role as the locus for cultural maintenance and transmission. In two-way schools this locus was formalised over time as vernacular and other resources were developed, utilised and housed in the literacy production centres attached to these schools. There is no doubt of the importance of maintaining Indigenous languages and cultures and until recently there has been a studied indifference and withholding or whittling away of support for their perpetuation by education systems. There is a need for renewed resourcing and state of the art mechanisms to enable language, maintenance of traditions and renewal activities, but the review team believes strongly these need to be established as activities distinct from the core responsibilities of schools.

53.   One's language and traditions are intrinsically important to identity and to establish self-esteem. As the experience of the Indigenous art, tourism and music industries would attest, they also present unique avenues for viable economic activity and social cohesiveness. In light of the emerging desert and tropical knowledge initiatives, the fluctuating but ever present demand for authentic tourism experiences, the emerging interest in biodiversity for pharmaceuticals and 'tucker' and land for mining and development, Indigenous knowledge has currency not only for its intrinsic value but also for the social and economic opportunities it can generate. Innovative ways to support the holding, renewal and protection of this knowledge and practice must be supported. A submission from the Diwurruwurru-jar Aboriginal Corporation pointed out

> *We have over half of our Indigenous interpreters move on to mainstream employment after training in the use of Indigenous languages in the workplace. Knowledge of languages has been invaluable in increasing understanding of the legal and medical fields. Interpreting is providing ongoing and expanding opportunities for employment.*

54.   To this end the review team proposes that facilities and mechanisms should be identified to enable the establishment of Language Nests at the community level. These would be small centres, linked to a larger regional Knowledge Centre, that are sites for nurturing language and tradition, are places where these are studied, sung, discussed, viewed, painted, video edited, archived. They can happen on Saturdays or daily and add value to the Indigenous studies, music or extra-curricula activities. The links between these Nests and the school should be brokered initially by Indigenous education staff.

55.   There may also be benefit in investigating and building on the Ara Irititja project in South Australia and the initiatives being undertaken through the Cape York Partnerships in relation to

digital holdings of Indigenous knowledge and enabling contemporary avenues for cultural transmission. The Indigenous Knowledge Centre Initiative of the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs could be linked to the smaller Language Nests and become the places for the holding, renewal and creation of traditional practices that could be accessed and utilised by education and other services. With the current rollout of ICTs across the Territory, and Commonwealth initiatives through the Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities – TAPRIC (DCITA) that include the establishment of Community Access Centres, the digital medium presents great opportunity for education, enterprise and cultural maintenance.

56.   Literacy and numeracy have been discussed in detail in Chapter 3. While the importance of literacy and numeracy manifests itself nowhere more starkly in the Territory than in the contexts of Indigenous education, it is by no means the only context where issues regarding their teaching and learning arise. We believe an 'all stops out' approach to raising the skills levels of young Indigenous people in these practices should be embraced. Separate or special measures for Indigenous young people have not been supported by this review. Instead we recommend that teaching and learning strategies currently reporting outstanding results, such as the Accelerated Literacy program, be supported.

57.   Alignment of these with informed English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and professional development is also recommended. Combined with a targeted focus on enterprise education activities as core school activities, as well as attention to the economic and social pathways beyond formal learning, we believe we will be setting the stage for renewed vigour and outcomes from our educational endeavours in Indigenous communities. The charge upon all involved in Indigenous education will be to foster continuous improvement and innovation that work for young Indigenous peoples despite acknowledged obstacles and disadvantage.

Capacity and Capability

58.   Effective schooling is dependent on the capacity and capability of the people involved. Where schooling is trying to respond to the very challenging needs of Indigenous learners in primarily Indigenous domains, on the fringes of mainstream or within the mainstream, the range of skills, knowledges, attitudes and the ability to apply these to foster positive learning experiences and outcomes are critical.

59.   Many leaders, teachers and support staff are struggling to cope and adapt to the expanding demands being placed on them. Not only are they reacting to the increasingly frayed social fabric, they are often working within contexts for which they are ill prepared and unsupported.

The level of the kids coming into secondary dumbfounded me. Many education staff also spoke of the daily trauma experienced by young people

> *It's amazing kids get to school at all. If kids down south had this level of trauma they wouldn't be here.*

60.   It was very apparent to the review team that many of the people involved in education feel they are operating in isolation and this is exacerbated by feelings of powerlessness. In urban schools many teachers spoke of ineffectual or non-enforced rules or behaviour management policies and there were a number of comments about being no longer *respected as teachers* or being threatened within classrooms. In remote areas teachers often spoke about being the only ones *trying to educate the community about education* to improve attendance or discuss levels of achievement or future options for the young people. Family members and elders on communities often spoke of their own powerlessness in getting the young people to listen to them and were also dealing with being *bossed* or *bullied*. Many expressed great despair about the reduction of jobs or traineeships for Indigenous people on their communities and felt very *upset that these were all going to whitefellas and their families*.

61.   Distributed leadership, timely and focused support, within collectively negotiated and agreed directions to improve capacity to address such issues, are of paramount importance. At one remote school, seven Indigenous teachers representing each language group in the community, are sharing the assistant principal duties. The teachers commented

> *We prefer to share the responsibility of leadership as we can support each other with the workload and in making hard decisions.*

To this end the layered recommendations put forward by this review, beginning with pedagogy and moving through to enabling structures and linkages to support real outcomes reflect the layered complexities of Indigenous education provision.

The needs of our young Indigenous people

62.   That all young people, including young Indigenous people, have talents, abilities and strengths is one of the underpinning principles and beliefs of this review. Our current capacity to nurture these in educationally meaningful ways is nowhere brought more sharply into question than when considering our Indigenous students. The rise and demise of pockets of alternative provision, the drift of these young people to Indigenous and/or VET providers and most worryingly the numbers disengaging altogether, raise critical questions about the current relevance of our secondary education system.

63.   In remote areas, young Indigenous people spoke of their ambitions to be football players, go on CDEP, get a car and in a few instances get a job as a health worker at the clinic or go to Darwin to become a mechanic. Many found the English and maths curriculum boring and as

one teacher observed, *they don't understand what literacy and numeracy are for*. It would seem that not only are the links between education and future aspirations tenuous, but many young people express future choices almost always within the constraints of the limited opportunities currently available to them.

64.   Both parents and the young people themselves enthused about the intermittent occasions Centralian's Mobile Adult Learning Unit (MALU) van appeared, or trainers from the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT). But these occasions come infrequently, seeming to drop out of the sky, and life reverts quickly to being *pretty boring*. It is little wonder that the excitement of football matches and trips within regions or to town take precedence over schooling.

65.   Where education arrangements conflict with ceremonial expectations, cultural obligations often take precedence. However, in some places, the cultural responsibility around Men's Business is being re-negotiated to include Western educational issues. Ways to re-define status could include making a ceremony of transition from primary to secondary. This could be similar to or incorporated in initiation, to clearly identify growth towards adulthood in Western education, so that the young men's difference is clearly marked, even if they remain in proximity to the younger ones. A traditional elder suggested

> *Secondary programs for Aboriginal people need some kind of distinction from primary, to acknowledge that the students are no longer children, plus find a way to pass on the traditional skills that are being lost, so the two go together, and they 'grow up' in both cultures.*

66.   Taking this a step further, it might be possible to make traditional initiation contingent upon achieving a certain level in Western education. This has been tried successfully in some communities in South Australia, but obviously is only possible where there is a carefully negotiated and strong commitment from the elders. This will create a tension with the current trend towards boys being brought forward for initiation at younger and younger ages, because the elders hope to 'catch them before they go bad', or before the elders themselves get too old, or die and the knowledge is lost. The place to begin discussions of this kind is in the development of social compacts between schools and community, in Phase Two of precinct development (see Chapter 7). This is a two way process, because, for traditions to be changed in these ways, there must be a clear *quid pro quo* for the Indigenous community – the education system for its part must be willing and able to provide an achievable primary and secondary education to those initiates.

67.   Other ways of encouraging commitment to secondary (and to primary) education have been suggested to the review, and in fact are already practised in some places. These include using an integrated services approach to target educational and other needs, and provide lifestyle coaches for the whole family, as often the grandmothers are the only functional ones who are

keeping the young people going. This can become very much dependent on the personal interaction between individual staff members and individual families, and so it would be useful to build in a learning process for such staff members on how to manage this.

68.   Involving the whole family in the educational process alongside the young adults, has many benefits. It means also providing a learning environment that encourages all adult relations to use the facilities, so that they are there for the young students and perhaps for their own education if there are suitable courses available in which they can be enrolled. In this way the older relatives can step in when needed, for cultural activities or other support. For example the women who are enrolled at the school doing art might go with the young people on a culture trip. Conversely, the very young children are exposed to the school and education early enough to make a lasting impression. If this also incorporates childcare support for young mothers within the school or nearby, and special programs set up to support them through their schooling, this will be a strong step forward in keeping young women learning in the formal school setting.

69.   In regional towns models of provision that enable inter-generational learning, adult literacy programs and opportunities for those who wish to re-enter learning, and that bring the passion of 'experts' to the learners also should be considered. For many young people, that their needs are being met in sites of alternative provision is exactly because these sites welcome family contact, respond flexibly to the sometimes chaotic realities of young people's lives, and work individually with them to achieve goals and aspirations. Strategic linkages with VET providers, including Indigenous providers such as the Desert Peoples Centre (DPC), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), and the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) as well as CDU, will need to be made. Collaboration with programs such as Reconnect and other Commonwealth initiatives whose focus is on supporting those young people who are chronically homeless and often caught up in the cycle of substance abuse, will be critical. The nature of these collaborations will need to be responsive to a framework of service provision that ensures pathways for progression and re-engagement are identified and made explicit to the young people themselves and their families.

70.   Many of the schools that have the best attendance are those providing physical incentives. For young people who are virtually homeless, suffering from poor nutrition and disrupted sleep, providing breakfast and lunch, and the opportunity for physical comfort such as warmth and security, or even a shower and clean clothes, are worthwhile inducements to start a contract for learning. We have to be honest about what might be meaningful contributions to lives that can be devastatingly bereft of even the most basic comforts.

71.   In the more dysfunctional communities, the schools have no choice but to engage in the total lifestyle of the young people, as Western education and learning are not a major part of survival, and can be dropped (and picked up) at various stages. A lot of the work in the schools is actually social work – one must have the basic needs met before it is physically possible to learn new and demanding things. To be independent enough to come to school, one must have at least some kind of reasonable physical and emotional level in life, and young people have said to us that it helps to be clean and fed, so they can concentrate and learn.

72.   At the same time, educational provision is not about encouraging a welfare dependency by providing 'something for nothing'. There has to be a contingency that if these things are to be supplied, they have to be earned by staying at school and participating in learning. It has long been recognised that trying to learn on an empty stomach is difficult, so breakfast to start is a reasonable proposition, but lunch might only be given to those who stay to work on the morning's literacy and numeracy or other core activities. To encourage afternoon attendance, many schools have found that it helps to make that a time for electives, or for something the young people have identified that they want to learn.

73.   For many young Indigenous people the rigours and structures of school may present considerable difficulties. These may be young people coming to town from communities, young people experiencing health difficulties, substance abuse issues or emotional trauma, young people who are homeless. Alternative learning spaces must be provided and this issue must be raised above the current shifting of responsibility between departments and jurisdictions to be addressed through a concerted and whole-of-government approach.

74.   Significant numbers of young Indigenous people have intermittent and chronic hearing impairment, due to the prevalence of *otitis media*. It has been reported that at any one time between a quarter and a half of Indigenous students may have hearing loss (Howard, 2003). Teaching these young people effectively requires much more than mere awareness. The 'chalk and talk' model of teaching and learning tends to compound the disadvantage these young people experience, based as it is on listening and responding appropriately, as does the inadequacy of the available infrastructure in most locales. In many schools the acoustics are so bad that regardless of interventions such as securing hearing aids for young people, the impact will remain negligible. Small group, collaborative, hands on and authentic teaching and learning practices can enhance the learning environment for these young people. Practical measures to address poor infrastructure must also be prioritised.

75.   An estimated 1 464 young people in the NT are considered homeless and are at a far younger age than is the case in other jurisdictions in Australia. Many are still at school and an

estimated 80% are Indigenous. Add to these figures the fact that the attendance rates of Indigenous students are far below those of non-Indigenous students, that they are more likely to present with a range of disabilities and far more likely to be English as a second language learners, and the issues impacting on educational achievement become palpable.

76.   Considerable effort is currently being directed towards retaining Indigenous students in urban and regional schools, through the transitions from junior to senior secondary and through to NTCE completion. In 2003 it is estimated that 300 Indigenous students out of a total of 313 made the transition from Year 10 to Year 11 successfully. However, the challenge is to ensure these students go on to complete their NTCE. Retention through the post compulsory senior years is problematic for Indigenous students, and explicit strategies of support and encouragement should be implemented for those at the threshold of 'success'. A number of respondents to this review made comment about the need for *elitist* strategies – ways of identifying young Indigenous people who might make it through their schooling, and targeting and providing whatever supports are necessary. One individual commented

>   *Any Indigenous kid who has an educational vision should be given 150% support and opportunity.*

77.   There is an urgent need to develop our capacity to expand the educational orbit of young people in remote areas; to lift the outcomes achieved at primary school and enable strategic engagement with learning beyond the classroom, beyond the community and with a clear focus on existing and emergent pathways from education to meaningful activity and remunerated work, whether in their communities or elsewhere. At one school in a remote community teachers have taken their senior students on an excursion to higher education institutions in South Australia. A teacher pointed out

>   *Indigenous students must be given an opportunity to explore their dreams and goals. They need to know that education will allow them to make choices about their future. We don't limit them to what may be available in the community.*

This educational orbit must positively embrace the cultural learnings and identities of these young people and foster identities as students who can succeed. The 'sister school' initiatives mooted in DEET's Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy are a critical first step in this direction. Moves towards greater co-ordination and co-operation between schools, as discussed in Chapter 6, should further enhance this.

78.   The review team believes that the NT Government has a critical role to play in initiating such targeted strategies. The Government also has an important role to play in facilitating processes between Indigenous communities or groups and private enterprise. Where such organisations, for example mining companies, enter into negotiated agreements or Memoranda of Understanding with Indigenous communities or groups, there is a need for strategies to improve educational outcomes that are integral, financed and able to be implemented. In an era

of corporate social responsibility and leading edge examples of mining companies providing support through mentoring programs and scholarships for young Indigenous people of educational promise, there is great opportunity to shape these agreements to greater effect. An example is Rio Tinto's program with Roebourne School in WA.

Indigenous involvement in education

79.   Issues of governance, involvement in education, and agreements for enabling a balance between rights and responsibilities of learners, families, communities are given focused consideration in this review in the chapters on Learning Precincts and Quality and Accountability. There is no doubt that in remote regions effort needs to be directed towards developing the necessary capacity and skills to enable community and school councils to come together to make informed and effective decisions about educational provision. In regional and urban areas avenues for effective representation and involvement of Indigenous leadership groups and families must be strengthened. ASSPA committees struggle not only with membership but also with having the sole responsibility for Indigenous cultural awareness within the school. At one remote community a member of the local council stated

> *There's no partnership between the school and the community and that's something we'd like to see. We like the Year 8 program at the school but we are not sure what it is about. We need more information about it.*

80.   There is a confusing array of employment categories for support staff within remote schools. Most are Commonwealth funded, each attracts its own application and reporting regimes and are perennially casual positions. The review team heard many comments about the lack of clarity regarding these roles, from the employees themselves, as well as from other staff. Indigenous people in these positions were often seen as *the black face that black kids are sent to for what may be a normal classroom issue,* although a number of schools have implemented strategies to address this. Later in this report it is recommended that there be a joint approach between the Territory Government and the Commonwealth to address issues of provision and this issue should be part of such considerations.

81.   There is a need for secondary schools to be places of safety and belonging for all young people, and where visible and valued Indigenous staff contribute not only to supporting Indigenous students, but are a core part of a whole school approach to fostering cross cultural understandings and tolerance. To this end, as stated in one submission, *skilling all teachers to teach all students* is the platform for our recommendations regarding putting pedagogy first and developing our capacity and capabilities. A need for a re-examination of the roles of and continuity for support staff, including Indigenous staff, is also identified. Many Indigenous staff made comments like

> *We would like some teacher training and some staff development. We teach small groups within the class under the teacher's supervision but we need opportunities for more formal training.*

82.   The capacity and capabilities of our teachers to teach the young people of the Territory, who demand respect and authenticity in educational relationships and learning, must be enhanced. While the review team spoke to, and saw in action many excellent teachers in remote, regional and urban schools, the reality of many learning environments was often less than ideal. The rigour and focus of induction and professional development for our teachers must be lifted and opportunities for both reflective practice and context focused learnings and innovations enabled. As pointed out to the review team by one teacher

> *ESL training undertaken on the east coast has limited relevance to the ESL contexts of the Territory, and to top it off ESL teaching and learning are very different between the Top End and Central Australia.*

83.   The capacity of DEET to facilitate the enabling structures for teacher support, induction and professional development will need to be enhanced. Top down provision should be supplemented by bottom up innovation. For Indigenous students, it is critically important that education staff, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, engage in cross cultural effectiveness training. Learnings and understandings that relate to the issues, challenges and complexities at the interface of traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultures and 'mainstream' Australia need to be gained, for this is the world young Indigenous people must traverse.

Service Delivery

Homeland learning centres

84.   There are over 50 homeland learning centres across the Northern Territory with enrolments between approximately 12 and 40 students of various ages. These are staffed as primary schools, although students from 4 to 17 years are considered of school age for funding purposes. While several of the homelands communities have a classroom, some have no power or water let alone educational facilities. They are serviced by visiting teachers who assist local teachers in delivering programs of instruction. Some secondary students in these communities are doing NTOEC courses. A National Enquiry into Rural and Remote Education (HREOC, 2000) found that

> *distance education…is not appropriate* for *homeland children, partly because English is the language of instruction* and because the schools *lack the infrastructure to bring technology such as computers to the community.*

The homelands communities in their submissions to the review echoed these concerns. They mentioned

the lack of educational facilities and resources; the training and poor literacy levels of their homelands teachers and the difficulty Indigenous teachers and students have with NTOEC courses.

85.   Members of the review team who visited the HLCs were impressed by the communities' determination to offer a healthy and safe environment for their young people where *they learn about country, language and culture*, and the communities' commitment to education. However it was obvious that given the student numbers and the isolation of many of these communities, it is not possible for DEET to offer a secondary education program equivalent to what is available in larger communities and regional centres. Many parents and teachers recognised these difficulties and asked that their secondary numbers be combined with other nearby homeland communities so a secondary teacher could be deployed in the area. They also requested that *NTOEC teachers be placed in the regions so they could deliver units of work* (at the school) *rather than just supporting teachers*. Many spoke of the need for a regional boarding school like the one recently established at Woolaning where young people from the region attend during the week and come home to their communities at weekends. The review believes that DEET must explore these options with the homeland communities but there is a need for honesty about the level of educational outcomes that can be realistically achieved by secondary young people choosing to stay in these communities.

Boarding schools

86.   The establishment in recent decades of boarding schools for young Indigenous people uses a recipe for teaching that can be traced to boarding schools of the United Kingdom, copied here in this country more than a century ago. The majority of boarding schools in the Territory are non-government. While providing an element of choice for Indigenous people regarding secondary education, for many they are the only choice. There are obvious and ongoing affiliations between some communities and boarding schools, some of these based on religion, some on proximity, some on history. There are currently between thirty and forty young Indigenous people from the NT attending boarding schools in other states.

87.   Issues faced by most schools in remote areas of the Territory can often be intensified in boarding school contexts. The review team was heartened by the efforts being undertaken in a number of boarding schools to enable students to excel in their area of strength and to foster an explicit understanding of the link between secondary education and meaningful work or enterprise activities

It's hard for them at first. When they say "It's boring" it really means "I don't understand/can't handle it". It takes them outside of their comfort zone. We need to lead them by the hand to do it, give lots of support and they end up loving it, are blown away by it. They begin to develop aspirations beyond the community.

88.   Given the dispersion and movement of Indigenous people across regions in the NT, it is not surprising that recent initiatives in secondary education provision have included the development of regionally based boarding school models. These can be noted for their responsiveness to building upon cohesive language, kin and affiliation networks as the basis of their student enrolment and the incorporation of mechanisms for close family support and gender separated classes. Some comments from young people attending these schools highlight the effectiveness of this regional hub model

> *They teach us more at this school. At home we only learn a little bit of reading because the teachers keep going away. We don't like it when they go away because there's no one to teach you. When a new teacher comes I feel shy because I don't know them.*
>
> *Too many temptations at _____ and too much trouble. Plus I don't like staying in Darwin. I like it out bush. No traffic. You can't hear the drunks screaming and it's very quiet. And there are no shops where there are sweets and lollies.*
>
> *I like it here because we learn different things. We go on excursions and it feels like home. No security and no caged up houses.*

The issue of the structure, placement and design of future boarding schools is discussed further in Chapter 10.

89.   The review team did find, however, there was often little transparency in explaining or communicating to Indigenous families the actual educational content and expected outcomes of participation in boarding schools. In some instances parents and family members were unaware that their young people would be undertaking bridging programs or un-graded secondary. From the perspective of a number of boarding schools, the preparedness of these young people for secondary schooling was so minimal that the schools felt they had little choice but to pursue preparatory and bridging programs. Some Indigenous parents who had themselves been to boarding schools acknowledged that students are not always adequately prepared. One said

> *If the kids can do the work they cope better. When I left to go to boarding school I knew the basics. It made a big difference.*

90.   Teachers, students and parents all agreed that Indigenous students often lack the emotional and social maturity as well as the literacy and numeracy skills for them to operate effectively in mainstream schools. Consequently, many young people attending boarding schools in regional or urban centres begin and end their time there in bridging programs. As a model of service delivery it has its place, but it was very apparent to the review team that the expectations parents had of the boarding school option were consistently not met. In the words of one community member, *they learnt nothing*.

91.   Parents are also concerned about poor communication with current boarding schools, and some cited examples where students were sent home without any explanation by the school.

One suggestion to address this problem is that of employing someone in the community to liaise between local schools and boarding schools, to act as a mentor during transition and to keep in touch with the boarding school and local students there, so that they can support them and report back to the community on their progress and problems. This might become a learning precinct responsibility under the new structures.

92.   Many Indigenous parents say that their children do not complete their boarding school education because they are too homesick, or they find themselves in trouble and are suspended or expelled. Sometimes those forced to return to boarding school when they do not want to go deliberately seek trouble so they can be expelled. Some may leave because of homesickness, because of clashes and *being teased* by other clans or groups, some are removed for business, and many refuse to return or come and go sporadically. For these reasons, many Indigenous parents and young people to whom we spoke, wanted secondary education to be provided on their home communities, or closer to them, or at least in a manner which allows them to spend as much time as possible close to their homes. The review believes boarding schools that enrol Indigenous students from remote communities must provide more support to students in their transition from the community school to boarding school and work with parents and their communities to improve student retention and achievement.

Infrastructure and integrated services

93.   It has been noted in this review that the Territory boasts some of the best and some of the worst educational infrastructure in the country. Much of the latter was evident on remote communities where many schools were in advanced states of disrepair. Some schools, urban and remote, exhibited a siege mentality with high fences and overt barriers, at times paradoxical to the nature of the effort occurring within. As one principal in a remote school pointed out
        Parity of infrastructure is important if students are to meet the required outcomes and in keeping staff.

94.   There is no doubt that available infrastructure and regimes of maintenance and repairs on many remote communities present difficulties. Many schools that were attempting to provide some form of education for secondary-aged students had no space to accommodate the young people, were aware of the pressure to separate young men and women but were unable to do so, and were often struggling to keep these students motivated in the face of the inevitable 'workbook' delivery pattern. Some schools had obvious facilities but struggled to encourage young people to attend. Some schools were riddled with discarded equipment, evidence perhaps of better times past, and some boasted rose gardens and vegetable patches, often teacher maintained.

95.   The realities of maintenance and repairs issues in remote areas are summed up in one submission to the review team. *There is a can't do mentality.* If a contractor happens to be visiting the community to service the clinic's air conditioner they cannot be utilised to service the school, no matter how dire the need, because of differing contractual arrangements between departments. It may take three weeks to get the 'right' contractor out to service the schools. This issue exemplifies the service dilemma issue experienced across the board in remote communities, and steps towards more integrated approaches are urgently required.

96.   The notion of integrated service delivery must also be extended beyond the confines of technical services and be encapsulated in how we approach people services, education, health and others. The integrated approach outlined in other chapters in this report demands effort in mapping both the capacity and range of existing services available and in leveraging resources to fill any gaps identified, within a co-ordinated and strategic, outcome-oriented framework.

97.   The Desert Peoples Centre initiative in Central Australia is proposing a 'one stop shop' for educational, enterprise and livelihoods services to remote communities of Indigenous peoples. Centralian College, about to become part of CDU, has an enterprise unit facilitating economic outcomes alongside educational activity. Cross-service provider 'steering groups' are emerging. Initiatives such as these need to be embraced and backed by governments and their departments. These issues and approaches to resolving them are discussed further in Chapter 10.

98.   The education of our young Indigenous people is of critical concern to many, including to the members of this review team. The issues we have discussed in this Chapter can be summarised as
   - the need to address the educational neglect of Indigenous young people, especially those living outside of the main towns in the Northern Territory
   - the need for quality, trained and committed staff, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who have skills and fluency in negotiating the interface of cultures and can foster respect, rigour and success in their teaching practice
   - the need for relevant and authentic educational experiences that foster positive learning
   - the need to transform the nature and resourcing of language and cultural maintenance, to enable cultural transmission and opportunities to shape the social and economic benefits that may arise from these
   - the need to promote transparency in and accountability for the educational achievements of young Indigenous people so that families and communities have an informed understanding of their responsibilities, rights and the outcomes they have achieved

- the need for innovative teaching and learning practices, targeted cross-sector collaborations and investments to ensure that young people who have special needs, including those with hearing impairment, can experience success as learners
- the need to provide targeted support for those young Indigenous people on the verge of educational success
- the need for regional, cross-sector and sustainable approaches to service delivery, including that of education.

99.   Our response to these issues has been to take a position of universal design. That is, what works for the most disadvantaged will work for all. All young people benefit from rich, dynamic and varied learning contexts. All young people can benefit from effective scaffolding approaches to literacy. All young people benefit from explicit and authentic teaching and learning practices. All young people thrive with high expectations and just-in-time support. All young people, particularly in the middle years, need support to consolidate their identity, develop their self-esteem and self-worth, and experience concrete and valued achievements.

100.   We recognise that our Indigenous young people stand to inherit a rich world of cultural and language practices, and that Governments and education services must play a role in the dynamic evolution of these, particularly where they interface with non-Indigenous practices and domains. We recognise the entrenched disadvantage, dysfunction and chronic health problems impacting so deeply on the daily lives of young people and we are suggesting an orientation and structure for education services that will serve as the platform from which to improve services and outcomes for Indigenous Territorians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indigenous Education
While there are only three recommendations attached to this chapter, this should not be seen to indicate that the review team considers Indigenous education as an area warranting limited attention. Every set of recommendations in the other chapters of this report includes recommendations that will contribute to improvements in secondary education provision for Indigenous young people.

It is recommended that

19.   The NT Government establish a cross agency task force to develop community based Language Nests that link to the existing Indigenous Knowledge Centre initiative. The task force should consider
- the ways in which such Nests should operate

- educational potential of consolidating contemporary ways and means to value Indigenous knowledge capital in schools
- existing programs or initiatives that the Language Nest model could build upon
- business models and emerging enterprise opportunities that could be facilitated
- the role of Indigenous education workers and community members in brokering the knowledge capital enhanced by this initiative.

20. To expand the educational experiences and leadership opportunities for young Indigenous people, the NT Government
- establish in 2004 a scholarship and mentorship program that builds over five years to 100 Indigenous students, for Indigenous young people who show that they have a talent, or have taken initiative, or show signs of potential high achievement in a range of areas of endeavour.
- instigate discussions with key private companies operating on or near Indigenous lands or communities, and with the Indigenous peoples and their representative organisations, regarding how negotiated partnerships or agreements can improve explicit educational outcomes for young Indigenous people.

21. the NT Government require that those involved with the provision of secondary education in existing and future boarding schools in regional and urban settings, work with schools and families in the home communities to improve Indigenous student retention and achievement. Both the boarding school and the school in the home community or precinct must work together to be accountable for
- implementing assessments and programs so that young people are socially and academically prepared for secondary education in an urban/regional setting
- the provision of ongoing support to Indigenous young people before, during and after their transition from remote communities to urban/regional boarding schools and hostels.

CHAPTER 9

BUILDING CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

The capacity of the people of the Territory to live fulfilled and sustainable lives arises from an education system they endorse as crucial to achieve this purpose.

Strong leadership, effective communication and sound teamwork underpin a quality education system.

Committed, well-prepared staff able to achieve mutual respect with the young people they teach delivers quality education. As a corollary, the Territory must attract, develop, and retain staff with a passion and commitment to achieve quality secondary education.

1.   This chapter discusses and recommends on the capacity and capability of the people we consider essential to the successful introduction of the changes proposed by this review. Matters to be addressed in this chapter are leadership, including student and community leaders as well as employees of the education system; the roles of teachers and other staff in schools, and conditions of service; induction, recruitment and retention.

2.   In times when the roles of educators are changing, the review team also took into account research and information from the review process on the most effective ways to promote ongoing professional learning. We endorse fully the thrust in the DEET Workforce Development Strategy 2003-2005 that sees professional learning and training as *occurring most effectively within the workplace and in the context of building learning communities with a sharing of knowledge and skills.* It is this same notion of learning communities that we have proposed in this chapter and in Chapter 3, and includes the activities associated with action research and action learning as the mechanisms for teachers and other professionals to manage and achieve the most from their own professional learning communities. Pre-service teacher training will also benefit from a closer relationship and mentoring role between training institutions, schools and precincts.

3.   Effective secondary schooling for the future is dependent on the capacity and capability of the people involved, and we expect that considerable effort will be needed to implement our recommendations successfully. Capacity and capability define the scope and appropriateness of the skills, knowledge and attitudes of people throughout the system. These capacities and capabilities will underpin system recruitment, development, retention, continuity and leadership, as well as effective participation by young people, families and the wider community in the work of schools and precincts.

4.   In this report, the term 'capacity' is used to mean whether or not the people, work teams, structural units and divisions have the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes essential for bringing about the changes we propose and for participating effectively in the new system when finally established. The term 'capability' is used to indicate whether they have the ability to apply these skills, knowledge and attitudes to the anticipated roles and responsibilities.

5.   There is a range of key stakeholders in secondary education. On the one hand, there are those concerned with providing secondary education, including the principals and other educational leaders, teachers and other staff involved in the teaching and learning interface. On the other hand, there are those people who use the secondary education services, including students, parents and families, and interested members of the community (volunteers, leaders, employers, enterprise developers, even if their 'use' is confined to employing the graduates of the system). Behind it all are the DEET staff who advise the government and provide resources and support to the schools and precincts.

6.   Another group of key stakeholders is those who provide other services within the learning community (welfare, health, police and so on, as well as other education providers such as non-government sectors, VET and universities). This chapter looks at how to improve the capacity and capability of some of the key stakeholders in order to improve learning outcomes for Territory students.

Leadership and change management

7.   The complex nature and extent of educational change proposed in this review will require staff in schools and in DEET agencies to adopt new ways of working together. Leadership is the mechanism for guiding effective responses to change, and is linked inseparably to the process of change management. Both are achieved through clear vision, meeting challenging goals and a commitment to action that is shared by all participants. Without effective leadership, both within the education bureaucratic infrastructure and the schools and precincts themselves, positive change is less likely to happen, and is unlikely to be sustained over time (Elmore, 2002b; Fullan, 2001).

8.   What decisions are made, who makes them, and in what manner, will be critical to the success of any changes proposed by this review. Young people, now used to having more say in the running of their lives than most of their forebears, are concerned that they should share an active role in any change process that may affect their educational future. Parents, school communities and other stakeholders will also expect to be involved to varying degrees.

9. It was evident from the consultations and submissions that in the most successful schools leadership comes from powers and responsibilities delegated among many people. They develop a shared vision, goals and strategies for continuous school improvement, and work together to put these in place. This notion of shared leadership as a vital ingredient for effective school and organisational change is also supported in recent literature (Elmore, 2000b; Fullan, 2001; Senge, 1990). Elmore (2002b) maintains *the complex nature of instructional practice requires people to operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies that have a clearly defined division of labour.* Change happens most effectively when goals and end points for change are identified, and where teachers, young people, parents and the community can lead and own the change.

10. When we are talking about leadership in this report, therefore, we are not just referring to principals in the existing model, or heads of precincts in the new model. We are using the more generic term 'educational leaders' to denote a wide range of people, with students and teachers at the centre, who will be co-operators in the change process. In fact, in times when teacher shortages are almost certain to increase, it is likely the para-professional staff in schools and precincts will assume a significant leadership role.

11. The review saw evidence of several examples where school staff are working together to lead and manage positive change in their schools. A submission from a group of staff at a regional high school stated

    Staff are committed to improving relationships with students and between students as well as student outcomes. The school has been organised into sub-schools where each group of teachers is given a considerable amount of autonomy and decision-making ability, and the current principal encourages staff to try new projects to improve students' attendance, retention and outcomes.

12. In another school we visited, staff worked together to change the structure of the school to meet the learning and social needs of its students more effectively. Staff told the review

    The good thing about this structural change was that no one was forced into it. We [teaching and support staff] all talked about it for a good term before we implemented it. Initially, it was put in place as a trial and we assessed and evaluated the change for a semester. We then weighed up the positives and negatives and decided we would persist with the new structure.

13. In both schools, the council and students played an integral role in developing the vision and strategic direction and in evaluating the change. Members of the review team visiting these schools noted the productive learning environment and positive relationships between staff and students. Student attendance has improved and staff commented on the positive developments

in student attitudes towards learning. They anticipate this improvement will be reflected in achievement in the NTCF levels and MAP tests.

14. Given the high turnover of staff in the NT, particularly in remote schools, leadership should not depend on one individual. An ongoing 'school as a whole' group that has continuity, including people from the whole school community (young people, parents, teachers and other leaders), sustains continuity of corporate knowledge no matter who becomes principal. In Indigenous schools there is also a need for the traditional leaders, men and women of law, who have authority over the young people and their families, to be included in the school's change management and continuing leadership processes, and for learning support to be provided for people in these roles.

Attributes of leaders

15. Leaders have to be relationship centred so they can foster and develop the changes needed to achieve the school or agency's shared vision in a climate of mutual trust and respect (Fullan, 2001). This requires constant contact and effective interactions both formally and informally by leaders with all staff, students, parents and other key stakeholders in the organisation. Many teachers told us they wanted principals to take a more active role in leading change for better teaching and learning in schools. They spoke of principals who were 'real estate managers' supervising the development and maintenance of school infrastructure and preoccupied with administering school finances rather than focusing on teaching and learning as the core business of schools. At a number of schools staff commented that principals were *out of the school too often*, which placed *extra pressure on teaching and executive staff* and made it difficult for students and some staff to have regular contact with the principal.

16. Elmore (2002b, p.4) believes principals and other educational leaders must be prepared to *ask hard questions about why and how things work or don't work, and … lead the kind of inquiry that can result in agreement on the organisation's work and its purposes.* They must offer their staff (and students) models for learning and develop a learning culture within their organisations and schools. Creating and sharing knowledge is central to effective leadership and principals and senior managers in DEET should be leaders of professional learning communities that focus on improved learning for all staff (and students) in the organisation or school.

17. The review noted several examples where principals had created the time and conditions for professional learning. Teachers were working together to share and refine current practices or develop new teaching and learning models. While there could have been greater emphasis on quantitative and qualitative evidence in the evaluation of these practices, the review

commends these schools for their efforts and witnessed a very positive approach to teaching and learning by students and staff.

18.   Even so, the review team is well aware that sometimes schools experience major difficulties and need strong direction to turn them around. Sometimes this leadership and extra support will have to be brought in from outside, as the NT or the particular community may be too small to provide it. The review team noted and endorses strongly the work of the DEET Capability Development Unit, and we believe that this unit should be expanded to enable it to assist more schools.

19.   There are particular issues that arise for Indigenous people involved as leaders in educational change. As one Indigenous principal put it

> *It is very hard being an Indigenous principal in a Western style school. It's hard to meet the demands of DEET and the wishes of the community. You have to be prepared to suffer for your leadership as you get a lot of criticism from both sides. But I think it is important to leave my footprints behind so that other Indigenous kids can follow.*

Support and mentoring are essential for people in these important roles.

20.   The review noted the strong focus in DEET on strengthening leadership through its planned approach to the development of senior and executive staff who are participating in programs such as the Leadership Development Program (LDP), the Public Sector Management Program (PSMP), the Executive Development Program (EDP), and the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP). In fact the review team has used a number of excellent project reports from these programs in its deliberations. Even so, we believe there is merit in establishing an additional leadership program for young teachers in the early stages of their careers who show potential to be educational leaders, in order to build the pool of expertise for the future.

21.   Many comments were made to the review about increasing the accountability of all staff in promotion positions. One teacher statement that *executive teachers and assistant principals shouldn't have their job forever; they should be on performance based contracts* typified these comments. In order to facilitate the process of change proposed by this report, we believe the assignment of staff in any formal leadership positions to a particular school or posting should be for a specified time, with performance goals and assessment of them clearly negotiated. This will include heads of precinct, principals, assistant principals and executive teachers if they are not already operating on this basis; although it is not proposed that the latter two groups would be on contracts. Rather they would apply for promotion positions for a defined period and have the option of re-applying for that or another position at the end of their tenure, or of reverting to classroom teaching. This move would assist the re-definition and re-focusing of roles and

activities of these personnel over time, while providing the flexibility to re-configure the system's and the individual's capability to meet the new and emerging challenges ahead. While the review team is well aware that most people focus on the term of the contract (usually 3-5 years), the essence of a contract is not the period, but the outcomes expected. There is a need for regular assessment of performance, and for action to be taken if goals and benchmarks are not being achieved. This can occur at any time during the appointment.

22. Another group in leadership positions is Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs). In the NT, around $1.9 million is spent on Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs) annually, and the review noted earlier the startling inequalities in the distribution of these personnel across the NT. For example, there is currently only one secondary TEP in a remote school. The review heard that there is not enough incentive for teachers in remote schools to become TEPs, and that the process and selection criteria for becoming a TEP are deterrents

It is such a long process and there is so much paperwork involved that it's really not worth it.

Others spoke about changing roles for TEPs and it was not uncommon to hear comments like

TEPs 2 and 3 should be moving across the system. They should be out there mentoring other teachers. Currently our TEP program rewards individuals but it does not benefit the system.

23. The review believes there would be considerable merit in strengthening the role of TEPs in schools and in precincts. Their roles should include leadership of the pedagogical changes this report is recommending, and mentoring, in systematic and structured ways, teachers in training or teachers in the system needing professional support.

Student Leadership

24. The capacity and capability of young people to perform well at school or even to attend school at all, is discussed elsewhere in this report. It depends on parental issues, student motivation, and variously on community sustainability, health and well-being issues, and the involvement of their families and communities. It will also relate to whether young people have the literacy, numeracy and technacy skills required in order to cope with the pedagogy and curriculum content once they are present in school.

25. Once young people are at school, specific programs to develop their knowledge, skills and experience in leadership are necessary. This is part of a good secondary education and of developing 'good citizenship' and an understanding of young people's own cultural values and those of the wider NT, national and global community; and of enabling them to experience effective community participation. The review team heard of some excellent leadership

programs in schools and exchange programs which were highly valued by student participants. However, too few Indigenous students participate in such programs.

26.   Individual schools and precincts also need to look at how power, leadership and relationships are structured, and the way these affect students. A common theme in many consultations with young people was that they believed *they were not listened to* and they had *little opportunity for real decision making*. As members of one student representative group noted, *we deal with the small things, organising sports carnivals and fundraisers… we don't get consulted about major issues.* The school's culture or 'tone' creates expectations of how everyone should behave. It will not be the same from one school to another, but must be clearly articulated, agreed by all parties and followed through at all levels, with clear pathways for student leadership.

27.   Some specific initiatives to enhance student leadership might include
   - using older students to assist younger students learn and to mentor them for community service, cultural, sporting and academic activities, a strategy facilitated by the precinct model
   - identifying potential future teachers from senior student cohorts and mentoring them
   - establishing a Chief Executive's Student Forum, modelled on the Chief Minister's Round Table for Young Territorians, as an opportunity for students to have direct access to the Chief Executive of DEET, to give input in a meaningful way on policy and strategies. Young people from Territory schools and precincts would be invited to nominate for the Student Forum and be selected by the Chief Executive to obtain a cross-section of students from various ethnic and social groups and regions. The appointees would be given some leadership training and meet perhaps once each semester
   - emphasising the importance of students being involved in the decision making of the school on many levels, not necessarily just an SRC
   - creating mentoring and support programs, and scholarships for Indigenous students who show that they have a talent, or have taken initiative, or show signs of potential high achievement, in a variety of areas of endeavour – sporting, enterprise, science, mathematics, arts, music, community participation, health and wellbeing and so on[19]
   - creating various Young Territorian awards to recognise outstanding achievement by secondary students in a variety of areas, not just academic

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[19] This could be a scheme whereby, as discussed in Chapter 8, over the next three years, up to 100 young people from all regions of the NT might be identified as being at a point in their lives where extra attention and assistance could prove crucial to their future development in the area of their special talent. This could operate as a leadership development scheme, while noting that traditional Indigenous cultural leaders are often preordained, and not necessarily the ones who will fit non-Indigenous models of leadership. Two different sets of support programs may be appropriate, one for those who are the top 50 in non-Indigenous terms, and one for those who are hereditary leaders. In the case of the latter, part of the program might be to provide special opportunities for them to spend time with *their* leaders.

- factoring in appropriate student membership of governing bodies of precincts
- encouraging participation as leaders in pastoral care, mentored transitions and 'buddy' systems
- supporting structured programs that provide opportunities for students to come together across schools and across communities for shared events such as the Yeperenye festival, sports events, Barunga Careers Expo, Ikuntji Youth Expo
- working to retain top students in the NT for further study or employment, or attracting them to return after tertiary study interstate.

Parents and Communities

28.   If parents and the wider community are to increase their capacity and capability to be involved in the education of young people, a more flexible and transparent approach needs to be taken. Much of the discussion about capacity building for these groups is included in the chapter on development of precincts. However, in more general terms, some of the comments and suggestions made to the review regarding parental involvement include giving parents a lot more information about their children's schooling, what they are doing, why they are doing it, how well they are achieving, how their performance can be improved, and how parents and teachers can work together to facilitate this.

Parents need to know their role in the educational partnership so they can be more involved and accept greater responsibility for their child's education.

Parents have not embraced sufficiently the concept of devolution and what this means for them on school councils. Many feel ill equipped and have insufficient time to work on school councils. Many parents want to be involved with their child's education but do not want to be on a committee. More creative approaches are required to improve parent involvement.

29.   The principle underpinning the building of community capacity is one of genuine partnerships between groups and individuals. Such partnerships are built on trust and two-way relationships. They take time to build. Some parents have had negative experiences of school themselves and are reluctant to be involved, others lack the skills or confidence to be a part of their child's education. Staff in schools, too, do not always have the necessary skills or understandings to enable them to work most effectively with parents. Opportunities for intergenerational learning at the school often assist in overcoming these barriers. They mean introducing people to new ideas in their own comfort zone. They involve real consultation – not just listening, but hearing and acting.

30.   ASSPA committees have some particular concerns of their own. As one group said

> *Schools think they own ASSPA resources. They tell us what to do, even when to meet and about what.*

These committee members felt that they and other parent groups like them should have a stronger say in decision making that affects them and their children; that their role should be strengthened in schools, and that schools should publicly recognise what they are already doing. Some consider that their role was reduced to fundraising and breakfast programs when they had so much more to offer, in school councils, in decision making and in keeping the school accountable. For example, they suggested that AIEWs and other Indigenous workers should be interviewed by the ASSPA committees, and the Indigenous Assistant Teachers should be on the ASSPA committee as well. It was felt that there was a need for strong ASSPA committees to ensure that Indigenous students' achievements are recognised at assemblies and in newsletters, and to ensure that *important cultural stuff* isn't dropped from the curriculum.

31.   The process of building capacity will in itself produce educational outcomes all along the way. The review team is confident that a deliberate policy of building community capacity with educational outcomes in mind will produce excellent short, medium and long term outcomes for all involved. Such a policy will also result in a better connection between government and communities, a greater understanding of policy, better traction 'on the ground' of policy and strategies, and improved social cohesion.

The changing roles of teachers

32.   While rewarding, being a teacher anywhere these days, and particularly in the NT, can often be difficult work. In spite of some poor quality housing and work conditions in regional and remote areas, there were many instances of highly professional teaching. The team saw excellence of teaching practice that matches anything seen at the national level. However, as stated in Chapter 3, the quality of education delivered to secondary-aged young people varied greatly across the Territory, and there is work to be done to increase the capacity and capability of the teaching workforce to enable it to move in directions outlined in this review.

33.   A major issue for the Territory is the recruitment and retention of quality teachers, and their preparedness for the job they will be expected to undertake. As we have noted before, much more is expected now of schools and teachers. The term *in loco parentis*, once used to describe a limited number of formal responsibilities that teachers took on in place of parents, now extends to a real and wide-ranging replacement of responsibilities that many parents and communities are no longer performing, or able to perform.

34.   This leaves some young people struggling to cope, or even to survive, in a world that no longer has the supports and comforts to which they should have unquestionable access. As a consequence, these young people have a different set of attitudes about how they interact with the world and the adults around them. As one teacher said, *many of the kids these days have the highest needs I've ever seen – I'm out of my depth as a teacher.*

35.   In general terms, many secondary schools in Australia have remained much the same as they always were, a not unexpected situation given a survey conducted in 2002 found that 50.6% of the secondary teacher workforce nationally are 45 years and over. In the NT 49.4% of the secondary teachers working in government schools are 45 years or over (MCEETYA, 2003). However, the needs and circumstances of the young people in schools have changed substantially, and the responsibilities and actions of teachers in relation to their students must also change. Schools and teachers cannot shut the gate on the emotional baggage of young people and must respond with greater flexibility (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998).

36.   Given they are dealing with young people operating in a very different world, today's teachers must have very different capabilities. The roles and responsibilities of teachers have been altering, but will have to change further to respond to these rapidly changing social conditions. If this involves a change from the ways schooling was managed in the past, then new ways must be developed for teachers to respond. They should not be left alone to do this, and in fact, there were teachers who told the review they needed better preparation and training in relationships with students, parents and communities.

37.   In giving reasons for staying at school, and participating fully in what it offers, the main emphasis of young people is stated in terms of their relationships with teachers, their friends, and other staff. The main reason given by the young people we talked to for leaving or 'acting up' is not getting on with a teacher/all the teachers or other staff members in a school. How they experience school also relies on the quality of interactions with their peers, and the degree of support from their out of school community (primarily family, but also the functionality of the 'community' in the wider sense). As one respondent said

> *Behaviour management issues can arise from students' lack of interest in the academic program of the school. They come here for other reasons: security, food, friends, warmth, in a life with none of that at home. The academic part is only a small part of what teachers are asked to do. Schools are being implicitly asked to take on a surrogate parent role; they are in a sense the last resort in a society where all supports are breaking down. Teachers need to be trained for this new role; their interaction with students needs to be more relational than authoritative or instructional.*

38.   As this quote suggests, reasons for behaviour problems extend beyond the fact that many young people test the boundaries of their behaviour. Today they have expectations to be

treated differently, more or less as young adults, making decisions about themselves and their schooling that previous generations were not allowed to make for themselves. This means that the most successful teachers are those who act as a guide and mentor, who are willing to negotiate learning with their students rather than trying to exert an authority that many young people are no longer willing to accept unquestioningly.

39.   Many teachers expressed the need for professional learning to recognise, acknowledge and take into account other relationships and consequent responsibilities that affect the functioning of their students. The traditional relationships and responsibilities of young people in Indigenous society, including young adults with children of their own who still want to continue their schooling is an example. Knowledge about, and strategies for recognising young people's other skills and learnings outside the school are required, as are the attitudes, skills and knowledge for respecting and working with the sources of these skills and learnings. This is particularly important in Indigenous communities. As one Indigenous parent put it

> *For the young men and women who have been through ceremony, we should get 'recognition of cultural learning,' like TAFE and uni students get 'recognition of prior learning'.*

40.   A more generic need for teacher preparedness is in the area of appropriate knowledge and application of secondary age-relevant pedagogy and learning principles. The review is recommending an integrated problem-based pedagogy for what we have termed the later middle years. The associated shift in emphasis away from teaching the content of specific disciplines has implications for teacher training and the professional development of current teachers. DEET will need to promote the requirement for an educational capability among teachers in these years that facilitates teaching across broad curriculum areas. For example, in science a Bachelor of Science degree with a generalist strand (biology, chemistry, physics, earth science and mathematics) would provide a superior grounding for teaching in the later middle years to one in biology alone. Even so, specific and well-designed pre-service education specifically designed for those who are to teach in the middle schooling area will be needed in the future. Subject breadth is not sufficient.

41.   Each school or precinct must examine, in the light of changed socio-economic conditions, the ways in which their teachers in particular, and all staff generally, relate to the students. Some do it now, but it must become a more formalised part of the school's strategic planning processes. Each teacher's role in our view must be clearly defined consistent with the school's strategic plan. In this context, many teachers said they believed teachers' roles should be more clearly defined. The review's reference group stated *it would be useful to put in place some specific professional standards for secondary teachers* but said such a document must go beyond generic statements to more detailed standards for teachers.

42. So what kinds of qualities do teachers in the Territory require to teach effectively, and to support the changes that we are proposing in this review? We have already discussed the skills our proposed Stages of Schooling will require of teachers at the later middle and senior years in Chapter 5. In addition to these, teachers across all years and all disciplines will need to be willing and able to
- take a role in assisting students through transitions
- strive to become culturally sensitive and aware, not only of particular racial contexts, but also of the culture that young people create for themselves as a group
- take responsibility for remediation in numeracy and literacy while this is required at secondary level
- respond positively to change, and perhaps be involved in leading it
- take up opportunities to further develop their professional knowledge and personal abilities to meet the challenges of teaching in a new socio-cultural context.

The review believes the roles and responsibilities of teachers must be clearly defined and that professional development must be available so that teachers are able to fulfil these roles.

Support staff, other professional and para-professionals, and other agencies

43. Much of what has been said about teachers applies to other staff and everyone else involved in the schooling of young people. The responsibilities they carry in today's schools have changed and broadened, as have the ways in which teachers need to work with and relate to students, to each other, and to other staff and participants. The education industry, particularly at the secondary stage, has not changed sufficiently to meet the very different client base now to be served. If employers and systems had adjusted, there would be many more non-teaching staff working now in schools.

44. The role that support staff play in the education of young people should not be under-estimated. Their contribution is critically and uniquely important. Many consultations and submissions emphasised this fact, saying things like

> W*e need more tutors and youth workers, and more people who come and go in the school. The staffing formula is wrong; we need more support staff and ways of mixing them up. Teachers shouldn't have to cope with everything, they should be able to share the load with cultural brokers and other experts, or just plain people with good life skills, all of whom can provide many new answers and ways of doing things, or help you find out who can.*

45. There are, however, some issues that are specific to support staff in schools, not all of whom are funded directly by DEET. These support roles include Assistant Teachers (ATs), Inclusion Support Assistants (ISAs), Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs),

Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) tutors, nurses, police, Centrelink staff, counsellors, careers advisers, and many more, including some who perform administrative support roles. The most pressing issue is the plethora of support staff roles and responsibilities, which need to be streamlined, as each has different roles (at least on paper), different funding, and different reporting rules.

46.   The second most urgent issue is that many are employed on a casual basis, paid by funds that require a great deal of paperwork to acquire, and which may not be approved in time to retain valued staff members. Some consistency and continuity of funding, titles, conditions of service, career paths, and roles and responsibilities, and clarity in how these overlap must be established. Schools and precincts have to be more specific about the ways in which they manage and support their non-teaching staff, and the freedom to deploy them to suit the particular needs of their student cohorts.

47.   This not only applies to staff under the control of DEET; there is a growing recognition in many schools that they need daily relationships with experts from other services, particularly for those schools working with relatively dysfunctional people, whether it be whole communities or smaller groups within urban and regional centres

> *We are a school but we need personal counsellors and social workers on site too. Every day there is at least one kid in crisis who needs to talk to someone about his or her life. Teachers don't necessarily have the skills to handle the situations that come up. We need more links to other services outside the school, too, who can help us at a moment's notice.*

The review is aware that the use of older citizens as mentors has proved successful in other jurisdictions, although focused training would be needed.

48.   An examination of the ways in which all staff work together so that each contributes effectively to the ongoing learning in the school is essential if what goes on in schools is to be both efficient and effective. This is likely to include appropriate training for support staff, such as in developing basic numeracy and literacy, or life skills, as many have little training beyond their own schooling or a Certificate III. The teachers and other leaders who work with them also require training in managing a diverse team of staff, so that their skills and knowledge can be further developed and better used. Since support staff tend to be locals in many remote communities, they often stay in the system longer (if the funding that pays them is renewed in time) and resources and a great deal of effort should be invested to enhance their input and recognise and value their work.

49.   There is also a strong case for the establishment of minimum training requirements for support staff and para-professionals who have a direct relationship with students, particularly ATAS tutors, AIEWs, and ISAs. At the moment these staff can be employed with little or no

formal training behind them to assist them in their work. There are many para-professional fields where some training is required.

Staff mix

50.   One school HR manager said

Staff shortages are critical. Perhaps it is better not to pretend to teach the subjects that you don't have the expertise for rather than have an unskilled, unprepared but willing teacher trying to fumble through. Staff shortages are going to change the way we look at things. For example the human resources market is changing significantly. We have to start being more flexible in the ways we approach teachers' work arrangements. One solution I have found to keep teachers is to accept job sharing arrangements and changing the timetabling to allow part-time work arrangements.

51.   These statements apply equally well to other staff in schools and precincts, and one of the most significant ways of dealing with shortages of expertise is to be able to deploy different mixes of teaching staff and para-professionals to meet the new demands. Schools and precincts should have more flexibility to structure their staff, select to suit their identified needs, bring in para-professionals, move staff and students around (between schools in a precinct, if necessary), team teach across disciplines, share resources, experiences and expertise on a daily basis, employ men and women of law within an Indigenous school, and so on.

52.   There is scope to employ external professionals and para-professionals presently, but many schools do not avail themselves (or are not aware) of this opportunity to better address the comprehensive needs of their students. The review team saw many cases where the more diverse blend of talents achieved excellent outcomes for secondary school young people. A member of the Reference Group observed

There is no need for the school universe to be populated only by teachers and students. Teachers do not have the licence on working with young people and they often do not have the experience to provide students with the broader perspective as to why they are at school and why they are learning.

53.   A typical such case would be bringing in a carpenter to help with a building project involving students, using the local clinic nurse to run a health education subject, talking about law and order with the local police officer or school based constable, having an on site counsellor and careers adviser.

54.   Improved responses to VET funding submissions are required. Program funding is time-consuming, resource-intensive, creates disjunction in continuity of staff and other resources,

and inhibits proper planning. Schools and precincts may need VET Coordinators or administrative officers to oversee and prepare these submissions.

Class sizes and staffing formula

55.   Class size on its own was not a significant issue for many teachers who spoke to the review. When raised, it was often linked to other issues such as large junior classes in comprehensive schools with a small senior cohort, students with special needs, behaviour management, and safety in practical classes. It should be noted that currently teachers in the NT enjoy the best student to teacher ratios in Australia (see Chapter 2), but given the diversity of student needs and the high proportion of young people with low levels of literacy and numeracy skills, current ratios or better are essential.

56.   There were teachers in comprehensive schools who lamented that classes in the junior school were often very large as a consequence of school decisions to run very small classes in the senior years. Teachers complained of junior secondary class sizes of more than 30 because the school was running senior classes of fewer than 10 students. The AEU submission to the review also raised this issue and it is addressed in Chapter 6.

57.   Class size was also raised as an issue in relation to meeting the special needs of students not only in terms of the teacher student ratio but also in relation to the level of student support needed from other para-professionals and professionals. With so many young people in the NT demonstrating special needs such as ESL, hearing impairment and other physical and emotional problems often as a consequence of social or family dysfunction, staffing cannot be based on a purely educational model. Dealing with chronic health and well-being needs takes many different people working together to facilitate learning.

58.   In Indigenous schools where virtually all teaching in English is second language teaching, the challenge is further compounded by geographic dispersal. Examples of this were evident throughout the Territory, and were a major subject in discussions during consultations. While it is possible to argue that just about everyone in the NT could put up a case of 'special need', there were enough comments on the matter for this review to suggest that there must be a resolution found to the issue of staffing formulas. The review was frequently told *that staffing formulas do not work.*

59.   Teachers often linked behaviour management issues with class sizes. Some claimed large classes are the cause of behaviour management problems, while others believed larger classes are not a problem if the students are highly motivated and focused on learning. The review was

also told that *large numbers in practical classes are dangerous* and teachers are *watering down the curriculum because of large class sizes and safety issues.* It was suggested by one teacher that *another support person should be available in practical situations.*

60.   A recent review (Buckingham, 2003) of research on class sizes has pointed out that
good Australian research on class size and its effects is non-existent, and research from other countries is inconclusive.
It went on to say that any research into class sizes must take into account the effects of other variables such as the nature of the cohort (including students with disabilities and students with serious behavioural issues) and the quality of teaching. Certainly, NT-specific research is needed to assist in estimating, particularly on remote communities, what level and kinds of support in terms of teachers and support staff are required in schools and in classrooms to bring young people up to an acceptable level of achievement. It is clear to the review team that the system has a limited evidence base for decision making about staffing allocations, and this is perhaps an area where Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) could work with DEET to develop about strategies for overcoming the range of issues that limit acceptable levels of student educational achievement. In any event, it is the sort of practical research that, if undertaken by the two institutions, would have significant impact on developing the human capital of the Territory. We have not made this the subject of a recommendation, but we would like the two institutions to take up the issue to see whether they could obtain funding from both NT and Commonwealth sources to take on such a task.

61.   A Staffing Formula Review (Rolfe, 2003) conducted by DEET undertook a detailed and comprehensive examination of the current staffing formula. It did not, however, offer this review a way forward as it comments on the old structures and our concept of precincts challenges those structures. It did, though, make the point that the current formula is too prescriptive and reduces the opportunity for local decision making. The review suggests that the system move beyond this, towards a more global budget system in which major resources will eventually be under the control of precincts so they can have the flexibility to use these resources in ways that best suit local needs.

62.   In the system we are proposing, there are current functions that a centrally located Human Resource Services Branch might perform in different ways to accommodate the principle that the central office serves the schools or precincts, not the other way around. These include consulting at the local level and then advising DEET on the need for changes in staffing formulas, staff mix and in conditions and terms of employment, including salaries and promotion positions, that will need to be more flexible to cope with new arrangements within schools and

precincts. As precincts develop, a Territory-wide staffing formula might be less and less relevant to their needs, so that other funding mechanisms, or other ways of determining the allocation of resources, might need to be devised. The new funding would be orientated to improving student outcomes and the requirements of student learning, rather than the number of students in a class. In this way, resources could be made available more flexibly for other staff profiling such as the appointing of para-professionals.

63.   Staff will remain employees of the system as a whole, with DEET recruiting them on the basis of needs identified by the schools and precincts. Then the precinct would select those that best fit their profile, deploying them or moving them around the precinct consistent with negotiated conditions of service to achieve the most effective staff mix, and managing their performance in consistent and systematic ways developed locally but with advice from DEET. The school or precinct would be expected to do everything possible to support staff to become effective members of their team, but in the event of a complete mismatch, they would be able to request that staff be moved to another location outside that precinct, but only the central office could terminate their employment, according to criteria that are part of the conditions of service.

64.   As the new system of precincts matures, however, it is possible that a precinct could eventually become the employer, having the power to perform all these functions, as is now the case with some non-government schools.

Recruitment and retention

65.   Secondary teacher shortages are already evident nationally, and are set to become more acute. Further, there is a trend for teachers to move from school to school more these days, which will impact more severely on the NT than in other places. Given the perceived hardships here, and the special roles teachers have to play, recruiting more of the quality teachers we need into the Territory is a difficult task. The need to retain them once they are here is another issue that was repeated in almost every consultation we had.

66.   In general, the review team considers that DEET should have a first class recruitment unit, centrally located, which is highly proactive in working with schools and precincts to help assess their requirements and to find a pool of potential staff from which they can select. This recruitment unit should cast the net widely, as the NT still does not have a large enough population of trained candidates, particularly in teaching, to fill all positions available.

67.   The findings of the recent DEET Human Resource Services Branch (HRSB) Review (April-June 2003) are generally consistent with the directions we propose, and we support its main thrusts, particularly in terms of the need for a functional unit within DEET to provide

*   a higher level of strategic human resources activity
*   comprehensive human resource data analysis
*   reliable operational advice to meet corporate goals
*   a key role in creating an organisational culture that values NT DEET staff.

68.   To achieve these, the HRSB review is proposing re-focusing the human resources function to serve schools and their needs more effectively. In our view, it is essential that these needs be as identified by the schools or precincts themselves. Schools and precincts do differ, sometimes markedly, and so do their requirements and expectations. We agree that the branch should also develop an explicit customer service approach to increase its impact on schools and precincts. This will have an added bonus of staff in the branch seeing their work as being valued, having a direct effect on what is happening in schools and precincts. Developing and maintaining records centrally that relate to staff is a key factor in human resource management, particularly if it is to become strategic.

69.   We agree fully with the concept of a marketing campaign designed to promote DEET as an employer. This is a key function of a recruiting section. DEET as an employer; however, must be able to deliver on expectations raised in such a campaign. There are doubts in some quarters whether this would be the case at present.

70.   When staff leave a teaching or other post for whatever reason, their replacement should be treated as a strategic opportunity. That is, replacement should occur in line with the strategic plans of the school or precinct. Succession planning should be an integral part of the school or precinct's long-term goals.

71.   This recruitment unit, we propose, should consult with schools and precincts in the development of system-wide recruitment and retention strategies, including

*   incentive packages tailored to the individuals to be attracted. For example, while salary is important, working conditions and having opportunities for professional development can be seen as more so
*   advertising that paints an attractive but realistic picture of the unique opportunities for new experiences, leadership and flexibility – marketing DEET as an attractive employer, and the Territory as an exciting place to be. One remote school's homeland centre staff made this

observation which cuts across both the need for and benefits of realistic recruitment materials and the induction issue

The Melbournites think teaching on a remote community is great – a unique opportunity. It really puts a lot of stress on individuals who don't know what to expect or who don't get a strong induction.
In other words, if the positions are idealised when advertised, the teachers may be ill prepared to make adjustments when reality strikes

- mutual contractual obligations (including career paths and security, opportunities for and obligations re professional development which might occur outside school time, disincentives for resigning before contracts are finished)
- considering the re-introduction of bonded study during both pre- and in-service training
- providing basic standards of safety and accommodation for staff in remote communities that compare favourably with those in other agency areas
- acknowledging and accounting for the sometimes debilitating and traumatising effects of living in regional and remote communities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. They witness some shocking behaviour and often feel there is a sense of futility to it all. Strengthened mechanisms for giving respite to staff in regional and remote areas are essential
- clear career paths across the system for both the teaching track in all phases of schooling (Assistant Teacher to teacher to TEP and beyond) and for support and para-professional staff, need to be developed, publicised and supported
- employing teachers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, skilled in more than one of the critical areas of pedagogy – literacy, numeracy, technacy, VET, ESL, Indigenous culture, behaviour management and so on
- through precincts, providing schools with the flexibility to manage students in different ways to deal with shortages of staff and adjust the learning spaces as required.

72. Particular attention should be paid to the recruitment of more Indigenous staff. It was suggested to the review that non-Indigenous teachers and other staff in remote communities should regard themselves as facilitators and succession planners, so that eventually they make way for more Indigenous leaders and teachers. This needs to be intensely resourced, and some suggestions from consultations and submissions for increasing the number of Indigenous staff in schools include

- looking at how Indigenous staff are currently being used, acknowledging that there is a level between Assistant Teacher and teacher that many ATs are already currently filling, without recompense. This situation should be formalised and rewarded as a step along a newly defined career path

- providing more on the job support and training for Indigenous staff, such as ATs, AIEWs, and administrative personnel as well as teachers, and how they are all trained to interact with and guide or support each other
- redefining the roles of non-Indigenous teachers and ATs so that the teacher has more responsibility for the administrative load and interface with the system, and the Indigenous assistant has more recognised (and appropriately paid) responsibility for teaching
- developing relationships to enable the local community to have a greater say in the running of the school or precinct. It was suggested to the review that some non-Indigenous teachers who are based in communities stay too long. They become set in their ways, resistant to the need for changing responses to changing circumstances, teach the same thing over and over, and don't make room for the locals to be teachers. One Indigenous respondent pointed out

  We know we'll need to keep importing white teachers for a while, but as long as they keep running the show, it will remain unstable. We need to aim for local Indigenous teachers to be trained over the next few years – and a way to start that, get them feeling interested and empowered and confident to train further is to start with them teaching language and culture in the school. Locals who provide Indigenous cultural input should be recognised as professionals, paid as such, and seen as the teachers of that part of the curriculum … That kind of knowledge is now a marketable commodity and should be paid for, at the very least with a consultancy fee. You need to pay respect, acknowledgment and money to the people in the community who provide the local knowledge and support to the school, and to the kids within it

- utilising the local leaders and parents, in structured, paid roles in the schools, and the young men and women in mentoring roles for the secondary aged children
- improving incentives for local Indigenous people to be employed at the schools. Comments were made such as

  All these incentives are put in for the white teachers who come out to remote communities, but there is nothing for the local people who are working there. For example, you should provide housing for the Aboriginal teaching assistants, you'd have lots of them then, and there'd be more incentive to become teachers

  and

  It would be more cost effective to train and use the existing workforce, the Indigenous people who live there and won't leave the land, rather than bringing in people from elsewhere, often at great cost, who will only stay for a short while.

- empowering ASSPA and other parent committees or Indigenous leadership groups to make more significant contributions to school functioning, including selection and performance assessment of staff.

All these points emphasise the importance of BIITE and CDU taking up the proposal made earlier that the offering of secondary education on remote communities requires considerable practical research and 'showing how it can be done'.

73.   A number of comments from submissions and consultations noted stress among teaching staff as a significant issue that impacts negatively on teacher retention and effectiveness

> *Teacher burn out is a significant challenge for teachers: teachers who prepare conscientiously, provide detailed feedback on student work, support students in their learning, teach the full range of behaviours and contribute positively to the life of the school community, need to maintain high energy and enthusiasm levels.*

Teaching young people has its intrinsic rewards, but the work is hard and can be demanding and stressful for some.

74.   The review team is aware that there are various incentives in place for NT teachers. Even so, we believe that, to remain competitive with other states and countries, further incentives to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention should be introduced. We were also told that the professional contributions many teachers make to education in the NT are given too little formal and informal recognition. Some possibilities for additional incentives include

- easier transfer providing transfer opportunities for staff both between schools and precincts, and also facilitating between jurisdictions
- extending opportunities for short and long term teacher exchanges both interstate and overseas
- remuneration for teachers who engage in effective action research that is published and disseminated by DEET to contribute to improved teaching and learning in schools
- introduction of the '4 for 5' salary arrangement, whereby teachers can opt to take 80% of their salary each year for five years, working for the first four years and having the fifth year off on the same salary
- greater and more tangible recognition of service milestones such as bonuses after specified periods of years, various forms of leave and non-financial rewards such as professional awards that provide recognition of professional service.

This is an important issue that should be discussed with the union and teachers.

Induction

75.   The review found there was widespread perception that teachers new to the NT system were often 'thrown to the wolves'—that they were sent (to remote schools particularly) with inadequate pre-service training, induction and support, and an inaccurate picture of what to expect. This results in new teachers often leaving after a short period of time or finding it challenging to provide the kind of educational service they would like. There was also a view that they were doing the best job they could under difficult circumstances. One remote school

with a strong secondary provision has had four principals in a two-year period, while so far in this year their Year 10 class has had seven different relief teachers and no permanent teacher.

76.　　Once educational leaders, teachers and other staff are recruited, there needs to be a rigorous induction program so that staff are prepared before postings, and supported throughout the probation period. Teacher expectations need to be realistic and met by the employer once staff are in the NT, and supported through the realities of life in a new position in a different geographic and cultural context.

77.　　The probationary period for new staff should involve systematic mentoring and could be a major responsibility of TEPs so that the professional learning community teams at that precinct would actively sponsor all staff.

78.　　The review was told that the induction model that applies for nursing/health should be investigated, and considered for adaptation and implementation if appropriate. The model would need appropriate variation depending on the nature of the geographical, cultural and school or precinct location to which the posting occurs. Useful inclusions suggested for induction programs were the provision of specific training for teachers going to work in remote communities, including cross-cultural effectiveness training, literacy and numeracy (age-appropriate), and Indigenous ESL, and practical strategies and knowledge on managing hearing loss in Indigenous young people. If the recommendations of this report are accepted, learning about new pedagogical requirements for NT learning precincts will be required in future for all settings, urban, regional or remote.

Pre service training

79.　　While considerable expertise exists in the staff in schools presently, there is a strong need for a much more rigorous and strategic approach to pre-service training. Many comments were made about the effectiveness of the secondary teacher training course at CDU. The following quote sums up the major concerns

> *The content of the course is not always relevant. It's too artificial; the course needs to be more practical. We need a top-notch teacher-training course and DEET and the schools must have a significant role in its design.*

80.　　A number of respondents told the review there should be an opportunity for educators to test out 'on-the-job' internship-type pre-service training models, especially, but not only, for Indigenous staff. CDU and BIITE should develop a project to find other ways to incorporate more hands on teaching experience in pre-service training. There was also considerable

support for adequate pre-service training in how to deal with unacceptable behaviours in students.

81.   In earlier chapters the review has identified the need for vocational learning to be strengthened, particularly in the middle years of schooling. One of the issues to be addressed is the shortage of qualified teachers in this area. The review heard many times that workshops and other vocational facilities were lying idle because there were no qualified teachers for these subjects, yet students are clamouring for practical courses. The review believes there is an urgent need for a pilot teacher training program to be established at CDU where people with trades or vocational experience can be fast-tracked into teaching. The review is aware that negotiations between DEET and CDU are currently under way to establish such a program and we believe that every effort must be made to have it operational as soon as possible. A similar program should also be established for other areas of identified teacher shortage such as mathematics.

Indigenous Staff

82.   Again, particular attention needs to be paid to the pre-service training of Indigenous staff. There is a clear need to train more Indigenous school staff, especially teachers, and to work towards having more Indigenous staff in remote schools. The main issue for Indigenous teacher training is how to plan and resource training that suits different pathways across the NT. The lack of secondary education in Indigenous communities is seen as the biggest contributor to this, very few local people complete secondary education now. The mode of delivery of AT and teacher education courses is the other major factor.

83.   Suggestions about how to fast track the training of Indigenous teachers include
- changing the current system to training on site as much as possible, particularly in the early stages, with a few intensive workshops and the like on campus, until students gain greater confidence
- exploring the possibilities of distance education
- providing easier access to funding for relief staff for when ATs and other staff are away studying
- considering bonding contracts for those whose training is financially supported (this also applies to non-Indigenous personnel)
- developing a carefully stepped career path and training system, starting with the establishment of pre-service training requirements, and professional development for AROs, AIEWs and other support staff, leading on to the certificates for ATs, with this leading more smoothly than it does now to full teacher training.

84.   Senior staff at BIITE told the review that there are many programs currently available through BIITE, including certificate training for AIEWs, linguistics, interpreting/translating, literacy and Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) programs. There are more people wanting to do those courses than they have funding for, and resources are needed for more spoken and written English courses. One of the most successful areas is Preparation for Tertiary Study (PTS), which is a bridging course from Year 9, 10 or Certificate III to University. It includes some education units so it can help towards qualifications to become an Assistant Teacher.

85.   Similarly, consultations with CDU revealed a number of current initiatives aimed at addressing some of the education and training needs of school-based Indigenous staff. One of these initiatives is the development of an action research-based professional development program that results in a CDU qualification. The target groups are those currently working as ATs, ATAS tutors, national literacy and numeracy strategy participants, AROs and AIEWs. The initiative will be locally delivered and address the specific need to provide real education and training for real qualifications with real professional employment pathways. So often the review heard that to be, for example, an Assistant Teacher, was a dead end job. Both CDU and BIITE need to be supported in their work to develop teacher training pathways for Indigenous people, especially those on remote communities.

Knowledge Management

86.   Organisations worldwide are designing and implementing techniques and technologies to manage corporate know-how more effectively. Knowledge can be codified in documents and policies, embodied in projects, proposals and held tacitly by small groups and individuals. The challenges all organisations face, particularly schools, are that knowledge is scattered, it is not always sustained or renewed and sometimes it is lost (Carroll *et al*, 2003). Given the dispersed nature of schools in the Territory, the average age of secondary teachers and the high turnover of teachers, knowledge management is a particular challenge. Schools must provide opportunities for teachers to sustain and renew their learning and for new learning to be effectively integrated into teaching and learning practices. Knowledge management is important for DEET too and opportunities must be in place to sustain and renew the learning of office based staff. In addition, DEET, schools and precincts must design systems that make knowledge accessible and retrievable.

87.   So that knowledge is maintained, renewed, shared and available to all teachers there has to be a change to the workplace culture in schools. Teaching has traditionally been regarded as a relatively isolated profession. While all teachers develop lessons plans, resources,

pedagogical practices and insights into how to relate to young people, this information is not always shared with colleagues. Yet such knowledge is a valuable asset. In recent years, some schools have established communities of practice where knowledge is shared, problems and challenges explored and new ways of working are formally enshrined into ongoing practice. However, these communities are only successful if teachers have a shared interest, if they see the benefits of sharing information, if they operate in a climate of cooperation and trust, and if time is allowed for such learning. Additionally, schools must establish rich repositories of information where some of these knowledge assets can be stored in an organised and systematic manner.

Professional development

88.   Some people claimed that existing professional development provision for secondary teachers is in a parlous state, describing it as unfocused, *ad hoc* and insufficient. The review was told that the present method of providing professional development does not usually work well for secondary teachers and other staff in secondary schools. One of the key issues was the outdated mode of professional development where teachers participate in one or two-day workshops with little or no follow up and no evidence that it made any significant difference to teaching practice and student outcomes. Another issue was the timing of professional development activities. Many teachers were attending meetings and workshops at the end of the school day where they were expected to participate in professional learning. As one teacher stated, *we are just too exhausted for the professional development to be of any benefit*. There were strong indications that the professional development on offer was taken up much more strongly, and used more effectively, by primary school staff.

Professional learning communities

89.   New models for professional learning should be adopted at school, precinct and departmental levels to address the issues of both professional development and knowledge management. One model could involve the development of professional learning communities where executive staff, teachers, support staff and DEET support staff work collaboratively to share, develop, trial and evaluate existing and new teaching and learning strategies to improve student outcomes. The review believes that the best professional learning communities are underpinned by pedagogical principles not dissimilar to those outlined by students for effective teaching and learning in Chapter 3. That is, teachers, support staff and office-based personnel need to have professional learning that is relevant and connected to their practice, and the learning must have intellectual rigour where sophisticated knowledge and understandings about teaching and learning are explored and new knowledge is created using action research methods. Moreover, this professional learning must be done in a climate of mutual trust and

respect where all are supported and valued, and the individual learning styles and multiple intelligences of staff are accounted for in the professional learning experience.

90.   Priority should be given to the uptake and impact of the 'learning community' style of professional development. Professional development should be run at times and in ways that meet the learning needs of the staff involved. Rarely did the review team hear of models of professional development where staff met during schools hours without it causing some disruption to the school. The Central Land Council education forum pointed out that, in addition to offering professional development opportunities, DEET must *ensure that schools are not closed or programs jeopardised while teachers and assistant teachers attend training courses.* However, teachers need time for quality professional learning and schools and precincts must negotiate this time with their communities. The review team heard of models where school timetables were organised to provide such time, others where teachers met in stand down time and others where professional development was run outside school hours. DEET and the unions would need to negotiate any industrial relations implications involved in some of these proposals. An example that the review team saw was at the Year 10-12 Australian Science and Maths School in Adelaide, where Thursday afternoons are set aside for staff discussions about curriculum and pedagogy and the students study on their own at school or at home.

91.   The review outcomes regarding pre- and in-service education and training should apply to all staff concerned with secondary education, including office staff, para-professionals and other school support members. We have already made a recommendation regarding pre-service training for some categories of support staff, but there are many other ways in which non-teaching staff may be supported in their professional training and development. This is as important as professional learning for teachers, as the contribution they make to young people's education can be significant, and even small degrees of change and involvement can be very effective. In some locations, the review team saw strong evidence that when support staff had a clear and committed view of the overall direction, this contributed visibly and significantly to the smooth running of the school. One example of several noted by the review was at an area school where the canteen operator understood the strategic directions of the school, was clearly committed to its values, and assisted in the out-of-classroom behaviour management and health regime of the students.

92.   DEET office-based leaders and staff may also require updating in relevant skills and knowledge through relevant and strategic professional development and performance management as, like all other staff in the Territory, their roles are likely to change in the new system that evolves as a consequence of this report.

93. The following points summarise the suggested future directions required for both pre- and in-service learning. DEET schools and precincts should work with the relevant groups to

- make available the best teachers, particularly TEPs, to supervise student teachers in school practice sessions
- develop new pre- and in-service training to support the dynamic and productive pedagogies required by the Teaching and Learning Framework recommended in Chapter 3
- target specialist training and professional development for helping the gifted and talented, and for working with young people with high needs, including hearing impairment, special education and ESL
- provide explicit professional development in pedagogical translation of the NTCF, with practical exemplars
- provide specific training on pedagogies for age-appropriate but foundational English literacy and numeracy
- make certain that every staff member has been through explicit training in cultural contexts at a local level, particularly as many teaching staff are currently recruited from interstate. Training must be at the level the teachers are at themselves, that is, it is little use to have professional development on-line at least for that teacher if the staff member knows little more than how to turn a computer on
- provide training for teachers and support staff on how to work together most effectively
- provide specific information regarding teaching and learning with students who have been affected by the consequences of family or community dysfunction
- provide leadership training for staff at all levels. They are leaders, role models and mentors to the young people at the very least, and operate better if they are also effective contributors to the whole-school decision making processes.

94. Many of the recommendations being proposed in this review regarding pre- and in-service training will require a re-negotiation of relationships with, and demands on CDU, and BIITE. These negotiations should be performed at central office level, but will need to identify needs through discussion with schools and precincts. Appropriate training certificates and post-graduate programs need to be developed to strengthen the pedagogical expertise and curriculum knowledge of existing teachers, and to provide effective training and development for the new roles required of other staff.

95. In general terms, for improvements to secondary education in the NT to be successful, teaching skills and expertise must be shared around the system and across other systems interstate and overseas. The review team saw many instances where substantial benefits would be gained, and many where benefits had been realised from bringing in leaders and role models from other communities, other regions and other systems. Other suggestions include

various exchange programs and other interactions between primary and secondary, between urban and remote, and between all schools in a geographical or cultural location, between the schools or precincts and their communities and businesses and with outside expertise to be brought in. We also saw benefits when teachers had the opportunity to visit or work in other schools interstate or overseas. It was suggested that teachers and DEET office staff might learn more too, if they could have the opportunity to shadow each other for a short period of time.

> *Get the department people to do an exchange for a day or a week in our place. They need to see how hard it is to get outcomes at all, let alone their expected outcomes. They need to know what it's like out here, so they can appreciate what we are doing. They need to make teachers feel good about themselves sometimes, not judged as wanting.*

This could apply to University and Institute staff as well.

Performance management

96.   While high expectations are important in dealing with student behaviour, it is also critical to have high expectations of staff. This implies a clear and consistent performance management system to support them in achieving those expectations. Many respondents told the review that performance management systems require strengthening in schools and that as practised presently, are not seen by some to be effective. As one principal of a remote school observed

> *We haven't got a really strong system of performance management. I could be as slack as all hell and no one would know.*

97.   Local leaders of all types, both those employed by DEET (principals and directors) and those in the school community (for example ASSPA committees or parent groups) should have a clear and appropriate role to play in staff performance assessment and management. Constructive and positive input from all levels can be helpful in improving the ways staff operate and interact. This may be implemented through a program along the lines of the well-known 360 degree feedback model. All teachers should support and be part of the agreed ways things are done in a school. This is the ultimate team approach to meeting school and workplace expectations and requirements.

98.   There is a view that the current performance management system lacks strategic impetus and is most often performed as a task that has to be done rather than as a strategic management tool and means of professional growth.

99.   Some suggested that structured and strategic performance management programs for all staff were needed, including principals and other precinct leaders, through to part-time and support staff, that recognise and acknowledge those performing well and help others not doing

so well to become the kind of people who can be effective in the system. One educational leader explained the reasons why the current system is not working well

> *Performance management has not been embedded in our practices. It's not being monitored so it's not being done well. DEET must ensure it is happening. It must also be linked more closely with professional development. The Workforce Development Strategy…should be a key tool for driving change in this area.*

100.   The system-wide policy on performance management needs revision to make it more strategic and to see that it is used as a genuine tool for staff development of all kinds, including for those in policy roles. At the same time, the practice of performance management belongs in the schools and the precincts, as close as possible to the staff who are engaging in performance management. They need mentors close at hand, *someone to sound off to,* and someone to guide them to enhanced performance. To be most effective, the process should involve feedback from students, parents and parent bodies such as ASSPA committees and other councils, but be managed in a positive and constructive way so that it is a learning and growing process, not a criticising and shaming one.

Industrial Relations

101.   There are recommendations contained in this report that will have industrial relations implications which will need to be negotiated carefully with staff unions at all levels. These new arrangements with staff should come into force as part of a school or precinct developing its strategic plan, which will include plans about what will be expected of its staff. There will be a need for a 'broad framework' EBA for the system as a whole, but with the specifics in areas such as those outlined below being determined at the school or precinct level. There will need to be discussions with the unions from an early stage to establish an approach that is positive and supportive of teachers and other staff, while being based on the best interests of the students.

102.   The requirements and tasks of staff will eventually be determined at the school or precinct level. There will need to be more flexible ways of rewarding staff so that to a base salary may be added loadings for extra work, for achieving high levels of performance, and for taking leadership roles. Staff may be expected to negotiate a job description for their work, which will require the delivery of outcomes consistent with the strategic plan of the school or precinct. Planned staff development, mostly at the school or precinct level, to support the direction the precinct has decided to take, would be a requirement for all staff, and may take place during stand-down periods.

103.   Most teachers concentrate, very appropriately, on the direct responsibilities that they have for students in marking, preparation and being in the classroom or learning site. However, it is widely acknowledged that their workloads extend far beyond this, meeting parents, individual discussions with students, team meetings, yard duty, spending time negotiating with employers and the wider community and many other non-teaching activities. Under the new arrangements, there will be different requirements for different stages of development of the students, and a teacher's individual job description would reflect this. Teachers might well be expected to provide support for extra or extended curricular activities as part of their workload. Rewards for such activities would have to be negotiated at the precinct level.

104.   Teachers may be expected to cope with a more flexible school day and school year. Schools may well open at night. Homeland Learning Centre staff at a remote hub school had this to say about school holiday times, with relevance to the flexibility needed for professional development time slots

Can we please have Dry Season school with only one week of mid-year holidays and add onto the Christmas break? There's nothing actually stopping us doing this now.

At the time of that consultation, the Assistant Principal said that the unions apparently had no problems with this kind of flexibility.

105.   Although good teachers do make a difference to student learning, effective schools are essential to maximise growth in student learning. Recent research (Marzano, 2003) in the US has found that students taught by highly effective teachers in highly effective schools will demonstrate the greatest improvement in learning outcomes. In general, a highly effective teacher on their own cannot influence much beyond their own classes if the school is not consistent and supportive of all its teachers and students.

106.   The review believes that good schools have
   ▪ good pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and reporting, supported by
   ▪ mutual respect, generally implicit in the culture of a school
   ▪ a shared vision and values, negotiated with all types and levels of staff, and students, parents, and their community, which are constantly re-iterated and supported and followed through
   ▪ passionate and committed staff who believe in the school, themselves and the young people, and who are inclusive of diversity in their pedagogy, statements and actions
   ▪ a clear plan forward, and a sense of optimism about achieving it
   ▪ community ownership, or active participation by parents and wider community
   ▪ a high level of expectation of what the young people, staff, and the wider community can and will do

- a culture of learning where all staff and students value the importance of high quality teaching and learning and take responsibility for their own learning.

107. More importantly, effective leaders are at the core of a good school and a good system of education. They will work positively with all stakeholders, teachers, students, parents, departmental personnel and members of the wider community to create a school or precinct environment with the essential qualities outlined above that sustain effective learning by the young people in their care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building Capacity and Capability

It is recommended that

22. to develop the quality of leadership in schools and precincts and to assist in developing a more strategic approach to leadership, NT DEET
   - in negotiation with schools and precincts develop and apply clearly defined and measurable performance indicators for all school principals as part of their annual performance management appraisal
   - offer all future executive teachers and assistant principal positions for a defined period, with reversionary clauses so that people filling these positions can go back to teaching if they do not apply for or win a promotion position at the end of their tenure
   - develop a leadership program for young teachers in the early stages of their careers who show potential to be educational leaders in the future
   - expand the Capability Development Unit in Schools Division to enable more schools access to its support.

23. in order to strengthen the role of Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs) and to allow for equitable distribution of TEP expertise across the system, NT DEET
   - redefine the roles and responsibilities of TEPs to include precinct-wide responsibilities for good pedagogy and curriculum implementation, and assuming a structured and systematic role in mentoring student teachers
   - examine and review as appropriate the application process and selection criteria for becoming a TEP
   - review the accountability arrangements across the three TEP levels

- provide opportunities for the strategic placement of TEPs in schools, with a view to making the system more effective in the Learning Precinct context and to providing for a more equitable distribution of TEPs across the system.

24. to recognise and nurture the range of gifts and talents demonstrated by young Territorians, the NT Government
   - establish scholarships and mentoring programs for young people with talent or initiative, or who show signs of potential high achievement in a variety of areas of endeavour such as academic pursuits, enterprise, business, industry, the arts, music and community participation
   - establish various Young Territorian Awards to recognise outstanding achievement by secondary school students in a variety of areas, not just academic.

25. to extend opportunities for young people and parents to assume a range of roles in educational forums and participate in decision making, NT DEET
   - establish a Chief Executive's Student Forum, perhaps modelled on the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians, to obtain direct input from young people about the education system
   - assist schools and precincts to develop specific programs for young people to prepare them to undertake leadership and support roles in their own communities
   - assist schools and learning precincts to develop specific programs to increase the knowledge, skills and experience of parents and teachers in working together to enhance young people's learning.

26. to maintain the quality and professional standards of teachers, NT DEET
   - define the roles and responsibilities of secondary teachers in the Northern Territory as outlined in Chapter 5, in order to differentiate between those who teach in the later middle years (Years 7–9), and those who teach in the senior years (Years 10–12)
   - define the roles and responsibilities common to NT secondary teachers in all years and all disciplines
   - require schools, where necessary, to provide professional development for teachers so that that they are sufficiently prepared to fulfil these roles.

27. to allow for more flexibility in staffing arrangements to meet the changing needs of students, NT DEET
   - work with relevant groups and Government agencies towards a simplified, consistent system of training, funding and employment of support staff in schools and precincts, and to develop more efficient ways of those groups and agencies cooperating with DEET to support young people's needs

- consult with schools, learning precincts and unions to establish staffing requirements at the local level to implement the new arrangements outlined in this report.

28. in order to recruit, retain and value teachers, NT DEET

- establish a strategic recruitment unit to act as an agency for all schools and precincts in the Territory, to provide a pool of recruits for appointment to all positions that are created or become vacant. This service is to be forward looking to meet current and future needs as identified in close consultation with the schools and precincts

- require that this recruitment unit set in place, as a matter of urgency, a recruitment strategy targeting areas of shortage such as skills in literacy and numeracy teaching in secondary schools, mathematics, ICT, technology and enterprise and vocational learning

- investigate, adapt and implement a model of induction to parallel the new pedagogy required by this report, including setting up probationary and mentoring mechanisms to meet the needs of the new learning precincts

- expand the range of incentives to attract and keep teachers in the Territory, and to acknowledge their professional contributions.

29. to improve the quality of and take a more strategic approach to pre-service training, NT DEET

- work with schools and learning precincts, and with relevant providers, especially Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), to develop and implement a more rigorous and strategic approach to pre-service teacher training and training support staff to prepare them for the new pedagogical and other requirements arising from this review

- approach the Commonwealth to fund ten scholarships for the Territory each year for the next five years for suitable Indigenous people to train as secondary teachers

- require that the NT Government's Teacher Bursary program give priority to applicants seeking to train in areas of shortage in secondary schools

- work with CDU and BIITE to establish a fast-tracking teacher-training program for areas where there is an identified teacher shortage.

30. to improve the quality and relevance of professional development, NT DEET

- work with schools and precincts, and with relevant providers to give priority to the DEET Workforce Development Strategy 2003–2005, and implement a professional learning communities approach to professional development for all staff employed in secondary education

- prioritise later middle years pedagogies, literacy and numeracy teaching, maths, ICT skills, enterprise and vocational teaching skills and cross cultural effectiveness training, for professional development of secondary staff.

31. NT DEET work with schools and learning precincts and its own centrally located functions, to develop and implement a rigorous and consistent staff performance management system that is locally tailored, but meets the requirements of the system.

CHAPTER 10
IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

> It is a right for all young people in the Northern Territory to have access to quality, affordable education and training, no matter how difficult this may be to deliver.
>
> The goal of the government is to provide quality services to all schools and communities, to turn this right into a reality.
>
> The minimisation of regional and individual disadvantage is a key focus for governments' service delivery.
>
> Many of the learning needs of young people can be met through Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) complementing the role of teachers.

1.   This chapter is concerned with how service delivery, in terms of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and infrastructure, particularly capital works (school buildings, houses for staff, site works, roads and so on), and transportables (buses, cars, caravans, mobile buildings and the like) can be best provided. In the end, these must serve and support the new pedagogies and educational emphases outlined in this report. It is also concerned with alternative ways of delivering secondary education when the infrastructure is not adequate, or not available at all. In the latter regard, ICT (insofar as it relates to delivering an educational service, rather than pedagogical considerations) has a special place in this chapter.

2.   All young people in the Northern Territory should have access to secondary education, not just those who live in the more highly populated areas. In this context it should be noted that to achieve equitable outcomes means resourcing according to local needs, rather than equal resourcing. The principle upon which service delivery must rest is that of minimisation of disadvantage. In many cases, an integrated services approach may be the only way forward to achieve this, given the Northern Territory's small population size, geographical dispersion and diversity.

Facilities: the infrastructure within which teaching occurs.

3.   The recent infrastructure audit conducted by DEET Financial Services Branch has shown that capital works and transport infrastructure in the larger towns and in a few remote communities in the NT are generally of an acceptable standard, when compared with other states. However, some young Territorians in remote areas have no secondary facilities at all and have to go to the nearest town for school, or what they have is so inappropriate to modern needs that it might as well

not be used. Moreover, there is significant under-utilisation of schools' capacity in many places (see Chapter 2), and the inappropriateness of existing classroom spaces for dynamic learning can also be an issue. The review was therefore surprised to note that millions of dollars are being spent on improving infrastructure in some urban Darwin schools. The clearest picture is the huge differential between urban and remote facilities, and this is exacerbated by the difficulties of providing ongoing maintenance programs 'out bush'. This equity issue must be addressed in any strategic plan for infrastructure rollout, maintenance and remodelling.

4.   Our definition of stages of schooling will result in Year 7 being brought into secondary schools across the Territory, and this will make a difference in towns where this is not currently the practice. Some rationalisation or reallocation of resources is likely to be required.

5.   Given the level of under-utilisation that has been identified, there is room for major changes to be made. While closing some schools, and selling off the buildings or handing them to someone else for an alternative purpose might be considered an option by some , the review team believes this does not have to be the case because other changes we are proposing may lead to a better use of current education facilities. An existing school that is well below capacity may be used as a site for alternative provision or as a centre for the learning precinct's student welfare network. These decisions will need to be made in the planning for learning precincts in consultation with the local community.

6.   More importantly, the formation of Learning Precincts is designed to lead to more effective sharing of facilities and resources between schools, between one educational provider and another, and between education providers and other people, organisations, services and agencies, both within a precinct, and between precincts. This will be one of the issues to be pursued when precinct strategic plans are developed. There are many ways in which a creative and flexible approach by schools can extend the use and 'spread the ownership' of their assets. It was clear in our consultations that schools providing after hours classes, including activities for adults, and allowing other people and organisations to use their facilities, are seen as an integral part of their local communities. This connectedness has the added effect of building a sense of choice about being involved in the school, and creates a positive educational attitude, which is often passed on by word of mouth. The benefits back to the community in terms of coherence and functionality are a reciprocal bonus.

7.   Some schools also run formal and recreational adult education classes and NTCE subjects after school hours, and students from those schools and from other

schools, as well as adults from the community can access these. Schools which have an ethos of community service, and establish after hours fee for service classes, and ones funded by DEET but provided by the school, find that the rewards back to the school are multi-faceted. For example, use by local primary schools encourages students from those schools to enrol in a place with which they are familiar when the time comes for them to make a choice and use by non-Government schools can be fee for service or involve other mutual benefit agreements.

8.   Use by adults is consistent with a lifelong learning model, and makes re-entry for older people a comfortable and welcoming process. In smaller communities this may also be a means of bringing back disengaged young adults, or enabling family groups to learn together at school, which assists in supporting young people's attendance. In larger towns and centres it is also possible at the same time to bring direct benefits to school or precinct budgets if they have a user pays system, though this would not be the primary purpose. For example, adult education evening classes conducted as an enterprise can have an important effect on resources, as the money earned can be used to buy equipment or materials for other purposes.

9.   Thus the sharing of resources between schools as proposed in Chapter 6, one of the reasons behind the proposed move towards the formation of learning precincts, is but one of the ways in which the review believes the Territory can make better use of its facilities. Precincts will also need to consider other ways of making good use of resources, such as
- night use by other organisations
- extended hours of use. For example, some senior schools operate more like a university, open for longer hours for secondary students as well as for adult users
- turn school centres into centres for enterprise, health, social welfare and so on, integrating with other services (especially on remote communities)
- use under-utilised schools or parts of schools to run alternative education programs
- encourage use for commercial activities, enterprises started by and for students
- employ a recreation officer to use the facilities out of hours and during holidays
- in some areas where the school is one of the only facilities available, or is the best one standing, and just a small amount of effort and money would make it useable more of the time, in different ways. For example, the upgrading of the basketball court or other sporting facility at a remote school could make a significant difference to that community's sense of connectedness to that school
- share facilities with remote sister schools; for example some town schools see a future in participating in secondary education delivery to remote schools, using

mobile units or other already purchased resources to assist this. ICT resources would play an important role in this as well

- share facilities with private providers of education and other services (ideally, this would be a reciprocal arrangement).

10. There is a common problem in many urban, regional and remote areas of vandalism to school property. The issue of security of the school after hours can be solved in creative ways. The idea is not to put up fences and steel bars, but to make the school both secure and inviting or a pleasant place to be. For example, one town school built a highly successful courtyard system. They put up special high concrete walls, but made them attractive by decorating them with murals, and designed them to be multi-functional to form courtyards, garden areas, and provide shade and shelter. This made them much more visually acceptable and did not give the feeling of prison walls keeping people out. Advice about such crime prevention strategies for schools can be sought from the Office of Crime Prevention in the Department of Justice.

11. With the right to secondary education comes responsibilities, and there is no point in improving infrastructure if it is to be ignored or damaged by a community that is only half-hearted in its support for the school. Any plans for change will need to be negotiated carefully with each community, and a social compact entered into which makes explicit the roles and responsibilities of all parties, before work can go ahead. This compact should be negotiated with all the relevant stakeholders, at the precinct level. This may include Town Councils, or in future the new Regional Authorities, all to be involved in the process of consultation and agreement during Phase Two of precinct development.

12. There are many possibilities, and ideas for new facilities and for innovative uses of current facilities will be generated from discussions as schools come together to form learning precincts. It is likely that precincts will need to change the configuration of existing structures to accommodate new, more flexible and individualised pedagogies, even to knock down a few walls here and there. Proposals for new or remodelled infrastructure, and different ways of using and sharing current facilities to enhance the pedagogy and to encourage community use or use by other schools, will be an expected part of the strategic plan for each precinct. As form follows function, so structure follows pedagogy, and existing schools almost without exception have been designed for 'one teacher, one class' pedagogy.

13. There are also facilities outside of schools or owned by other service agencies, that could be utilised better if they were shared with or amongst education providers.

One such example is Training Centres, whose ownership and use are currently under negotiation. In one town the review visited, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Training Centre all deliver courses and services from the same building, which accords with the thrust of this report for them to share facilities. However, in that example, each of these organisations is managing and delivering its own educational provision separately, and it is a duplication of resources for all these groups to be vying for students in the one region. In another town, these providers are physically separated but working in a coordinated fashion. Where feasible and cost effective, coordination and consolidation of the provision of educational services in terms of location, management and delivery should be one of the priorities of the learning precinct. Each of these providers should be part of the negotiation of comprehensive education delivery in the precinct, and it may be that they enter into a contractual arrangement with the head of precinct to deliver their business in that region via the school facilities, or that schooling is delivered in or through the facilities belonging to someone else.

14. Currently students in Darwin and Alice travel on publicly subsidised bus transport, often to attend the private school of their parents' choice, but also to access curriculum offerings not available in their own school. Although the realities of travel costs must be kept in mind, to open up all the facilities of a learning precinct to students provides educational opportunities that outweigh any transport costs, so that the sharing of facilities is done in the most cost effective ways.

15. The need to travel to different precinct sites might increase as students move through their secondary schooling towards more differentiated and specialist subjects. Students in the later middle years (Year 7 in particular) are less likely to travel except to meet a very specific subject choice. Thus travel might be more pertinent to the senior years, when the mix of subjects, VET, work and other activity broadens. Careful timetabling across schools will be one of the ways of limiting travel. Provided it has been negotiated as part of their terms and conditions, and where the facilities are available, teachers rather than classes should move around the precinct to conduct programs. The actual costs of educational provision may well be reduced by the organisational changes that will follow from our recommended Stages of Schooling, and by the increased choice available to students within a precinct. However, where it is necessary to satisfy the pathway needs of students, subsidised travel will have to be a part of the precinct budget.

16. Another issue that will need to be addressed in resource terms in the new model is that of the assets owned by current School Councils. This will need to be dealt with

in a very sensitive manner during the establishment of precincts, as such assets would have to become part of the pool available to the whole precinct. Maximum benefit for the maximum number should be the basic principle when facility and asset use is being determined.

17.   The recent infrastructure audit is an important first step in the process of identifying resources, which is to be developed further in Phase One of the implementation of precincts, as outlined in Chapter 7. As part of its responsibilities to oversee the formation of learning precincts, DEET will need to work closely with schools and precincts to develop and implement infrastructure maintenance and rollout plans for a variety of models of provision, that allow for new pedagogies, and an integrated services approach which may include reciprocal use by other organisations and private providers. As the Territory moves to the new model, planning will have to occur more and more on a precinct basis to give overall direction, which is then taken into account when plans for individual schools are being developed. These will, in turn, impact on precinct planning.

Service delivery to remote areas

18.   The provision of educational services on remote communities is well below acceptable standards in most cases, both in terms of infrastructure, if it exists at all, and in terms of maintenance. As one teacher said

The biggest difference between NT remote and other states' schools is the facilities — not just buildings but phones, computers, air conditioners, tables, materials, everything, even basic things like toilets, let alone hot water. There are two standards — what is tolerated for Indigenous communities bears no relation to what is acceptable for city or town whites, and all of it is usually housed in temporary demountables.

This raises the issue that the allocation of resources across the Territory is not as balanced as might be best for the total system, and remote areas must become a higher priority than they have been previously. Clearly, there needs to be a major improvement in secondary education provision in remote areas*.*

19.   For many communities, however, particularly those in desert areas, any proposals for new infrastructure development must also consider what this will mean in terms of ongoing viability of those communities (too many more flushing toilets in some places and there will be no more water). The desert aquifers are much smaller than those currently being used by the larger centres such as Alice Springs, and there is already concern about the future even there. Another consideration has to be that the more complicated the technology transferred to the community, the greater the cost in repairs and maintenance. A lot of the disrepair is not to do with vandalism but about inappropriate technology, as well as little local capacity to fix things if they

stop working properly. Many of the Western technical designs of houses, stoves, pumps and so on, do not accommodate the family and kin situation that pertains. The Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) in Alice Springs has made considerable advances in developing sustainable physical infrastructure for remote regions.

20.   While this has been a problem long recognised in the Territory, finding solutions has not been easy. We must be careful not to add to the burden, and one of the ways to assist in this might be to provide different models of delivery, rather than new infrastructure. In either case, it will be useful to involve the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DK CRC) and CAT in Alice Springs in discussions about planning for desert areas. The DK CRC has research into community sustainability and service delivery issues, with an emphasis on integrated approaches as one of its theme areas, and so it would be entirely appropriate for DEET as a whole, or for specific precincts to work together with the DK CRC from Phase One of precinct planning, to determine sound approaches to new service deliveries. The DK CRC is also interested in researching digital futures and other models for service delivery.

21.   Issues such as system sustainability, technical support and capacity building, as well as economic development, are areas of current interest at many levels of Government and to many different groups. These matters are also the subjects of discussion in the Government's regional development strategy Stronger Regions, Stronger Futures (Ah Kit, 2003). It is clear that the proposed precinct model will need a research base so that the issues at community level are not just transferred to precinct level, and that ways of integrating services and building regional capacity are based on sound models.

22.   Our visits to remote communities have shown us that currently not all Indigenous people are able to exercise the right to access an acceptable program of secondary education. However, there is little point in promising to provide a secondary education service, particularly if it involves new infrastructure, if the young people in the communities have not completed a reasonable level of primary education, and they and their parents or caregivers have little or no commitment to continuing attendance.

23.   Where there is as yet no secondary provision at all, we would expect a group of primary schools to come together with a proposal to form a precinct that would eventually include secondary. In this case precinct formation might begin, following the stages outlined in Chapter 7, but secondary education service delivery would not be commenced until there was a clear community commitment to it. Therefore, honest and transparent communication must occur from education providers to

parents and community about the real levels at which young people are achieving, particularly in English literacy and numeracy, and from parents and community to providers about what can and will be done to guarantee attendance and follow through. These should be key points in the compact negotiated between the community and the precinct/DEET during Phase Two of the implementation of precincts.

24.   Many of those we talked with had creative and useful suggestions as to how delivery of secondary education to remote communities might be improved, and these are covered in this section. Although primary provision is in a sense outside the terms of reference of this review, it must be reiterated that it is not possible to provide real secondary education unless a benchmarked level of primary outcomes has first been achieved, and so we are in fact often talking about the provision of both. One of the frequent comments made to the review team was along the lines of

> *We need more resources and effort into the primary school to support attendance and other issues. We need to fix primary before we fix secondary.*

25.   As a follow-on from this, there needs to be a clear understanding of whether secondary teachers will be provided to schools where the level of learning is still actually at the primary level, even if it is somewhat euphemistically dubbed 'ungraded-secondary'. Teachers in these circumstances will most definitely need to be of the kind we are calling later middle years teachers, rather than subject specialists. They will also need to develop or be cognisant of special pedagogies, and of appropriate teaching resource materials, required to teach those whose levels of knowledge or skills are insufficient for secondary level, but who have a young adult's status and understanding of the world around them.

26.   In remote communities in particular, most government services are finding that they are facing 'the future we cannot afford' in maintenance costs for the facilities that are already there, let alone any new ones that might be created, so we have to re-define the nature of the school itself, and the way we deliver learning. An integrated services approach, where responsibility for providing holistic and interactive services is taken up by all NT and Commonwealth agencies, would be a more effective and more equitable approach to meeting these new demands. This must also take into account the needs and wishes of the local Indigenous people, as they said at one Top End school

> *In the past we have had balanda in here trying to organise things from their way of looking. Now we are trying to bring different agencies together from our own perspective.*

There are many possible steps on the way to full autonomy, such as the cooperative responsibility and leadership model that is bringing together all levels of service

providers to address issues, under a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) pilot project at Port Keats (Wadeye).

27.   There are particular problems for Indigenous education in traditional communities with regard to the need to separate the sexes. We were told that *it is sometimes inappropriate for them to be together, and it makes them too shy to work properly*. Added to this, young initiates culturally cannot come back to a primary school facility as students because they are men now. The parents said, *it is a 'shame job' for initiated men to be with little kids*. This implies a need for a different infrastructure of new and separate buildings. The Northern Territory Government cannot afford this for every tiny group that exists on outstations and homelands, so we have to look at alternatives that can be provided within a larger precinct structure have to be considered, and ways found to make young men and women more comfortable within current buildings.

28.   Some of these might include separate times for young men and women to be taught within existing facilities, and both at separate times from the younger children in primary school. Another way to accommodate them in existing structures might be to concentrate on work experience, and make it ongoing in many areas so that more time is spent outside the school, which becomes a place for consolidation after work, or on weekends or when younger children are on holidays. This could be done in conjunction with the store, mechanics workshops, community maintenance areas (general repairs, landscaping), takeaway shop, clinic, childcare centre, or could lead to enterprise development, starting small businesses with them for example, selling craft to tourists as is being done in some communities, or taking tourists on day tours (walk, talk, bush tucker, music, art, dance) with an older person to guide the young people as discussed above.

29.   Other options include re-defining the status and roles of secondary-aged Indigenous students who are working with primary-aged students but continuing their own learning at whatever levels they can achieve. This could include giving them a structured role in relation to the younger children in primary school so that there is an adult reason to still be involved with the school – encourage them to become Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs), pay them to be tutors if they have the skills, or set up programs for them to be mentors in other ways.

30.   Many schools have set up buses or other transport to pick up young men and women and bring them to school, whether this is from homelands and outstations within the remote community itself, or from outlying places and fringe camps into a larger town. Daily bussing into town to attend mainstream schools is an option

strongly desired by some communities that don't have it, and is a relatively cost-effective solution to be supported where feasible in terms of distance. In both cases, whether it be bussing within a community or into town, it is important to follow this through by employing authoritative community members who will work with the young people and their families individually to get them to school, and act as supporters, guides and mentors while they are there. There is no point in bringing them to school and dumping them to sink or swim.

31.   There is a widely held perception amongst Indigenous parents in some remote communities that one of the ingredients necessary for educational success is to base school groupings on kinship or language groups, so that these are not mixed up too much, and are not too far away from their homes and families

Being lonely is an issue for our kids. They like to do things together as a mob and with family. They want to have proper secondary schooling at home, or near us.

Whatever the model, the perception is that small is better, local is better and that there needs to be a great deal of support and bridging courses for students in transition stages, and ongoing support during all of their schooling. If young people are sent away for boarding, parents say that small numbers living together seem to work well.

32.   For many years the only access to secondary education for a large number of young people from remote communities has been to attend urban or regional boarding schools in the Territory or interstate. While this system has allowed for a number of them to attain some level of educational outcomes, the retention rate of Indigenous students in town-based boarding schools has been very low. For example, at a College in Alice Springs there is an average enrolment of 200 per year, but 350 might move in and out of the school during that time. Issues associated with boarding schools were discussed in some detail in Chapter 8.

33.   There are various models for boarding that are in place at the moment. There are only a few full-time mainstream colleges with boarding facilities, and only one specifically an Indigenous town boarding school. There are a couple of remote non-Government hub boarding schools that cater for language and culturally related groups from communities in relatively close proximity to the hub. The students live in groupings based on family or on community of origin when they are at the school, and the house parents who supervise them are usually from that family or community. The boarding hub school is close enough to the communities from which the boarders come to mitigate homesickness by encouraging family members to visit, and by having time boarding balanced with time at home. In the case of one remote hub boarding school this is organised on the basis of segregation of the sexes, so that

when the young men are at the boarding hub, the young women are back at the home community schools, still continuing their education, and vice versa. This appears to be a sound solution that so far seems to be working well, but is costly in the duplication of resources, requiring secondary provision on the home community as well as at the hub.

34.   The schools that are actually community-owned private schools have taken a long time and a lot of hard work to develop. While these are good models to follow, they are expensive to fund. Communities who wish to develop similar systems will need to go through a stepped process of clear negotiation about what will be the responsibilities and accountabilities necessary to their achievement. This may be an end result of precinct development, but will require successful application for Commonwealth funding.

35.   Parents often want to send their children away from communities that are no longer safe for them, and remote hub boarding schools, built outside of any community but serving several, is one option to address this. The possibility of improving current facilities and expanding boarding choices in town centres should be explored as well. Options here might include funding for boarding with relatives, billeting, boarding during the week and home on weekends, hostel models, and group homes where some students at school in town live in family groups in homes with adult couples as guardians. This last model is being used successfully by an independent school in Darwin. Area schools and other government schools in town centres could consider developing boarding facilities. In all cases of formal boarding in small groupings, the review team noted that staffing with appropriate Indigenous house parents is the preferred option wherever possible.

36.   It was suggested that town schools could do more outreach to communities, to foster local enterprises such as art business. People want to do it, a market is likely to be available, and the teaching of such subjects can be relatively easily mobilised. For example, one town school sends teachers to communities on a casual basis (a set number of days per week, or fortnight) to teach things like screen-printing and silk painting. The term 'educational orbit' might be used to describe these linkages, which extend the experience of both the students (whether they be youngsters or parents) and the teachers. There are some natural linkages that are forming anyway, between particular remote and town schools, but more could be done. The mixed mode[20] delivery structure for secondary education as proposed by Toyne (2003) is a model

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[20] Mixed mode in that some time each term is spent on site in the remote community, and some in workshop weeks at a sister school in town, all backed up by considerable ICT input.

that could be explored by many places. The establishment of such outreach arrangements and sister school (precinct) relationships between town and remote should become a formalised part of each precinct's strategic plan.

37.   Remote schools and their developing precincts will need to work together in ever more innovative ways to initiate, or to better manage the provision of secondary education in their localities. Many new solutions will be devised in the process of generating proposals to discuss with DEET as part of evolving their strategic plans. Some have already been tried or suggested to the review team. These include

- mobile caravans staffed by teachers trained as subject specialists, which visit a group of schools within the learning precinct, often and regularly, for example a maths, an English and a science van, or all three together. This would need to be supported by later middle years teachers in the larger places, or trained Assistant Teachers, or some other form of educational guide and mentor in the smallest places, who remain on site to continue the program between visits
- setting up one central hub/facility in the community which delivers all services (education, health, welfare, law and order and so on) for cost effectiveness but also to support interaction, cross fertilisation, and an integrated services approach
- setting up a remote hub non-boarding day school which services the nearby homeland or outstation centres
- developing multilevel programs that cater for classes covering the full age range, and taught by a single teacher, perhaps with limited subject variety to any depth, supported by the mobile caravan concept, or by improved distance learning
- many people hope for little outstation or homeland schools, even if they are only for one family. The way this has been dealt with for pastoralist or station families in the past has been through School of the Air/NTOEC. This is seen as *okay, but not well enough resourced.* There is still the desire for a school, or at least a teacher who travels around, or for specific training for family members to be the teacher
- there are perceptions that only remote schools can access money to resource language teaching (ESL and Indigenous languages). It should be the responsibility of the precinct to search out and access what is available, based on DEET publicising such information.

38.   One of the matters raised most consistently in consultations with Indigenous parents and students was the desire for more work experience, enterprise and vocational learning and VET programs. The first two can be determined locally, and should form part of the precinct's strategic plan for secondary education delivery. There is a definite need to tailor VET and TRY programs to better suit remote

communities, and to find flexible modes of delivery for them, but that will require working with ANTA, both at a NT and precinct level, to simplify its bureaucratic processes and timelines, and to make VET packages more suitable for Indigenous students in remote settings. This is taken up in a later section of this chapter.

39. Of special concern to remote communities is the need for better interactive distance learning provision and technical support for it, so that more online delivery and innovative ICT approaches really are feasible. This is discussed in more detail in a separate section in this chapter, but for remote Indigenous schools, one of the major factors is encapsulated in the following quote from a discussion with a remote school

> *NTOEC courses were designed for kids on stations and many of the materials aren't suited to the needs of remote Indigenous students. NTOEC have had limited success in the area so it's time to use a new model for delivery. If we had the resources that NTOEC has had we could really do something.*

One of the suggestions to complement this is that on-site delivery could be better achieved if NTOEC staff were regionalised, so that schools could be staffed on the current secondary formula plus those staff from NTOEC based in town centres. They would then be 'closer to the action' to provide better on-site support. It was also suggested that

> *We need at least two teachers to run decent secondary programs in remote schools. We need to get NTOEC teachers into the region to support the teachers on site. We are pretty close to offering some excellent stuff but we can't do it with one teacher.*

The question of the future of NTOEC has been discussed previously in Chapter 6.

40. In all of the options to be considered for remote secondary education, the question of appropriate and effective staffing formulas will need to be closely examined almost on a case-by-case basis. For example, solutions which require a great deal of travel by teachers shared around localities will need to take into account the time it takes to accomplish that travel, and will need to include provision for ways in which programs will continue in the times when those teachers are elsewhere. Precincts will not only need to have the power to determine their own staff mix and deployment, but will also require establishment grants as seed money to develop secondary programs where none have existed before, including money for staff development and new resource materials. More generous staffing formulas may be required to maintain them once they are established. As one Indigenous principal said

> *DEET needs to get fair dinkum about Aboriginal education. The staffing formula must support the establishment of secondary education in the communities so we can offer a range of subjects. They need to recognise the status of remote schools and to give*

ownership of the school to the community. They have to provide the money and resources to do this.

41.   As part of the strategy to improve Indigenous education provision, Financial Services Branch has been working to establish design guidelines for educational facilities in remote Northern Territory communities. That completed, the branch is now charged with the responsibility to assess all existing remote schools against those benchmarks, and to identify estimated costs for the upgrading of schools to meet the guidelines. While this could be an important part of the information gathering and discussions in all phases of precinct development, such plans and structures must be re-evaluated in terms of the integrated services approach which is advocated by this report. If it is accepted that all government agencies should come together in various ways over the provision of infrastructure as well as of services, then any plans for new buildings from any department or service agency should take into account the possibility of housing several groups together in a central hub, or sharing facilities in other ways, if that is what is decided through the processes of consultation and discussion in learning precinct development. It is vital that those processes include a whole-of-government forum so that all services can come together to facilitate more appropriate and cost-effective shared infrastructure planning, rather than having a new multi-million dollar clinic one year and then following it up with another expensive structure for a new school the next year.

Housing and transport for staff in remote communities

42.   Housing and transport for staff have long been issues in remote communities, as they can be in some regional communities, where the housing for education staff is below the standard of that provided for other services such as police. On the one hand, housing and transport are seen as part of an incentive package to attract staff to those positions, and on the other there are chronic shortages and maintenance problems. In the same way as there needs to be a strategic examination of the provision of buildings in which teaching and learning occur, a necessary adjunct to any provision of secondary education in remote areas is an examination of the available housing, and options for improvement, with the same proviso about sustainability. If enrolment improves, or new centres such as hub boarding schools are established, then new accommodation of some kind will need to be provided for increased staffing levels. In any event, many of the houses currently available are in need of upgrading and maintenance.

43.   As part of the infrastructure data gathering, consultation and planning processes in all phases of precinct development, housing for staff will need to be discussed. Matters which might be considered include

- making it another arm of an integrated services approach by rationalising and coordinating across service providers. For example, negotiating with single staff the sharing of houses with those from other departments; swapping or leasing houses from one service to another as needs change; seeking to employ partners/couples either within teaching or across services. This latter might lead to a system of career incentives for partners/couples across services. Recruitment would then become an integrated service. These coordination processes also apply to the accommodation needs of staff from any service who are in the community on a short visit

- when developing new housing, looking closely at real needs – a three bedroom house is not necessarily the most appropriate response

- when recruiting and deploying staff, giving priority to suitable local people rather than adding a new staff member who requires a house

- if law and order continue to deteriorate on some communities, security will need to be improved or it might not be possible to send staff to those places at all.

44.   When housing and transport are seen as an incentive to bring teachers and other staff to the bush, there is also a need to think about them as incentives to commitment for the local Indigenous staff and Assistant Teachers, particularly those who are in training as teachers. Just because a person has been living on a community, or has family there, it does not mean that they have adequate accommodation and transport, or housing conditions that equate to those being offered to people coming in from outside.

Enterprise and vocational learning and VET

45.   Earlier in this report we have recommended that a distinction be made between enterprise and vocational learning and VET, and that both need to be enhanced and increasingly made mainstream in our delivery of education services. Enterprise and vocational learning, as outlined in the NTCF, should be assumed as a core aspect of teaching and learning in our schools and precincts, particularly in the later middle years. At both levels, but particularly in the senior years, VET should be enhanced through strategic linkages and offerings to support varied learning pathways and transitions for our young people within and across precincts and beyond. This approach will have implications for the nature of service delivery conceived and actioned at the precinct level, and will build on current initiatives, such as that of employing Work Place Coordinators, positions that now exist in some larger schools

and across some schools, to manage work experience and placements for young people.

46.   Currently enterprise and vocational learning offerings within schools are limited, and our evidence suggests that there are different degrees of access to VET programs even in the largest centres, in that students in Alice Springs have daily access to VET, whereas in some Darwin schools only Wednesdays are VET days. In urban and major regional areas of the NT there is significant energy being directed towards generating school-to-work pathways, including apprenticeships and traineeships, by schools themselves, through initiatives of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) and by public and private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Such activities would become focused and targeted within precincts, and opportunities for students would not be constrained by being outside the loop or at the 'wrong' school.

47.   It must be an aim of service delivery to build pathways in and out of enterprise, work, vocational learning, VET and general or academic courses. A Pathways Mentor (see Chapter 5) for each student, particularly in the senior years, will be a critical factor in facilitating this. Another critical factor will be schools and precincts developing closer linkages with community businesses, and other organisations that provide work. There is also an important role in vocational learning that can be filled by other professionals coming in from outside the schools, and para-professionals within schools — that is, *exposure to industry professionals and the culture of working.* The notion of flexible pathways to vocational learning requires a re-think of the use of school facilities, in terms of timetabling, hours, who uses the facilities and how, and so on.

48.   As indicated earlier in this chapter, the review team received many comments from families and community members in remote areas about the need for their young people to be given greater access and opportunities for local jobs. Not only could most identify existing opportunities such as working on the local pastoral lease, in the store or council office, in tourism, on local citrus farms, but there was also consistent comment about how *this used to happen but doesn't anymore.*

49.   This report is advocating an integrated services approach that contributes to the sustainability of the community as a whole, and the reciprocal nature of the role of education within this. A more functional community means more viable education which leads to greater functionality all round. A major factor in this is the lack of meaningful work and enterprise in many remote areas. Vocational learning logically should be learning which includes actual experience of livelihood activities, of

enterprise or of work, and if these are not available then it will be necessary to develop them. There needs to be mutual recognition and simultaneous development of educational and enterprise/livelihood/work needs and opportunities. Thus communities expecting to build work or economic activities might start with education programs and skill building, the purpose of which is to lead to enterprise or work, together with investigations of how to make these sustainable.

50.   For Indigenous communities, enterprises will have to address cultural obligation issues creatively, particularly as Indigenous culture is now regarded by some as a 'marketable commodity'. One of the strengthening and necessary characteristics in such programs is that they are inter-generational. In our discussions during consultations with Indigenous people, a constant refrain was

> *If we get secondary here, we need to get strong family support, be strong behind the kids. It helps to have parents and even little kids allowed in the school to make that happen, and to get them working from really young. For the big ones, we can get work experience and new jobs going, we can make them jobs about our culture too. Like taking tourists out to country and telling them stuff. But you have to have the knowledge to get it right, so you have to have young men learning side by side with old men, and young women with the old women.*

51.   Many VET programs in remote areas are being used to fill the gap in secondary education delivery. However, there are issues about the relevance for remote communities of a system designed and built for major industry work skills. Such work is rare out bush. To further compound the lack of relevance, young people in these places are unlikely to have the assumed levels of literacy and numeracy necessary to participate successfully, let alone complete VET programs with their current design. Few VET programs can take into account the specific needs of places where hearing, health and substance abuse issues are massive. Often the question for remote communities is, 'What livelihood future do we have at all?' rather than 'What work shall we choose?'.

52.   TRY programs are funded as user choice programs, that is, by competitive tendering. Even if a program is working successfully for a period of time there are no guarantees that it will be ongoing. Distribution of funding does not work on the success of the program in terms of engagement, attendance or real work outcomes. A program might be funded in one round, but in the subsequent round another school or community will be given their 'turn' in the name of distributing money equitably across the communities.

53.   There are multiple issues affecting the delivery of VET programs to remote communities of Indigenous people. Even if the factors of remoteness, poor

infrastructure and the additional effort required to negotiate services between DEET, community contacts and RTOs are allowed, the funding formula, based as it is on Annual Hours Curriculum (AHC) [21] actively works against both sustaining and expanding delivery on site. In small communities, it is rare to be able to access or interest a large enough cohort of students for any one particular course to make funding, based ultimately on student numbers, meet the cost of delivery. Furthermore, with the funding rate based on nominal hours, a figure set outside the Territory, the time on task that may be needed for people with both minimal English language skills and Western education acuity to successfully acquire the skills and knowledge, cannot readily be met.

54.   The review team welcomes current negotiations between DEET and ANTA about enabling more flexible formulas for funding remote VET services. It is also important to recognise that intermediary or brokerage services being provided by schools, RTOs and Department staff are critical to both the success of VET programs and in enabling training to move beyond training for its own sake to supporting capacity building and social and economic participation.

55.   In this regard the pattern of user choice funding being the key mechanism for supporting remote based VET services should be examined. In the context of the review's approach to meeting the needs of young people, being smart, developing, honing and value adding to their knowledge applies also to the way programs should be delivered remote communities to build capacity and viable futures. This cannot be achieved through one-off, stop-start programs as currently the case. Incentives for RTOs to provide and sustain VET services, just in time and demand driven, as well as to broker the necessary pathways and support the development of enterprises and livelihoods programs are key elements of the approach we propose.

56.   In remote areas VET delivery is sporadic. As mentioned in a previous chapter, some initiatives *live or die by the decisions of DEET and ANTA*. These days, fewer RTOs are willing to deliver to remote communities, and fewer lecturers are prepared to go bush because of dysfunction, security issues for staff, issues with poor attendance and so on. One answer is to fly people in just for a day or two, but this becomes very expensive. It might be useful to consider the model that used to exist, of an adult educator on site, or at least shared across a remote precinct. As one Top End school said, *perhaps each region needs a community learning development officer or a VET co-ordinator* to find suitable courses, write submissions and to assist with audits and acquittal of funding. The effort required to submit and acquit

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[21] AHC – the total nominal hours (supervised) for the modules undertaken in a year, used as a measure of total system delivery.

applications was consistently reported as onerous, and sometimes the impossibility of coping with this workload in itself leads to discontinuation of otherwise viable programs. Town areas are beginning to have workplace co-ordinators in large schools, or shared around a number of schools, whose job it is to facilitate school to work pathways. Similar positions are needed for remote precincts as well. These people might also have a role in supervising students when they go into town centres for VET training.

57.   Where they are available, school-based apprenticeships are beginning to make a strong impression. Schools with these in place, and the students involved in them, were very positive about the real benefits of such ongoing and practical training. They need to be supported, and extended to those areas where they are not yet available, noting that this might actually depend on the availability of enterprise and work in the community in which the school is situated. The suggestions identified in this report will require very different approaches and partnerships from those that exist currently, particularly between schools and the VET system.

58.   The review is aware that a region-by-region labour needs analysis of the NT is nearing completion. While this initiative is welcomed, the nature of the pathways from school to work or livelihood activities should be delved into in greater depth than merely an analysis of current employment trends or skills gaps. To this end we suggest an ongoing *skills ecosystem* approach, which would not only enable identification of existing and currently potential work, enterprise or livelihood activities, but also enable an analysis of the fluctuating demand and skills set, both cultural and industry based, required in these activities. This would elicit a constructive appraisal of constraints and emerging opportunities from which to map capacity and required change. It is critical that authentic livelihood and work activities be the catalyst for learning and skilling especially where Indigenous people have been and continue to be 'locked out' from the labour market and potential futures of engagement. A skills ecosystem analysis would enable precincts to target emerging opportunities both for enterprise and vocational learning activities, as well as targeted VET offerings.

Information and Communications Technologies

59.   Computer equipment provided through the Learning and Technology in Schools (LATIS) project was evident in all secondary schools across the Territory, and infrastructure rolled out through the National Communications Fund (NCF) project was becoming apparent. What was also evident was the consistent reporting of 'teething' problems with the hardware, software (particularly using Star Office rather than the more common Microsoft Office), insufficient bandwidth, and poor access to

technical support. Many governments including the NT Government are weighing up the advantages of less costly open systems like Linux that support alternative software like Star Office. Often its rejection is not so much because the system itself is inferior, rather that most people have access to Microsoft and do not want to learn a new system. While we do not wish to make any recommendations in this area, it is an issue that governments will have to respond to increasingly in future as the Microsoft monopoly comes under increasing challenge. In addition to equipment and software issues, the review was told that there has been limited professional development for teachers or students in innovative use of the technologies, and that instances of ICTs being used as tools for innovative, interactive teaching practices were very sporadic.

60.   There were several cases where schools were using their own funds to upgrade servers, purchase extra computers or more standard software. Students consistently reported frustrations with lack of access to computers, and poor or slow Internet access, mainly due to centralised or default decisions about blocking Internet sites based on economic rather than educational considerations (too big a download). They were also wanting to correspond with teachers or submit assignments electronically, a situation that many teachers and schools were not yet ready to manage, both temperamentally or technologically.

61.   On remote communities there is clear evidence of the rollout of ICT infrastructure in schools through the LATIS Project. However, technical support and training for staff on communities remains a critical gap. Extra technical support is needed in these schools so that the equipment rolled out through the LATIS project can be put to maximum use. Teachers also need more opportunities for professional development if they are to create the exciting learning environments that the LATIS program promised. In one community the review team was witness to the first LATIS training session for staff, which was occurring (during lunch) more than a year after the systems had been installed.

62.   The review team sees the need for the NT Government to develop a clear strategic vision for ICTs in education and develop mechanisms to support innovation within learning precincts for its achievement. There is also a need to develop an integrated services approach to technical troubleshooting and systems support. Separate sectoral approaches here are both unsustainable and unaffordable.

63.   The current state of play does raise some critical questions for the future direction of ICTs and education in the Northern Territory. The characteristics of the Territory present unique challenges for infrastructure rollout, technical support and

maintenance. The diversity of peoples, contexts and cultures that is the Territory demands a clear vision of what goals the technologies can be harnessed to achieve. One goal should be improved distance education, given the small, dispersed and isolated nature of our communities. Another is to create and share holdings of Indigenous knowledge, languages and practices. Yet another is to enable communities of learners across cultures and geography to access the English, science and mathematical expertise so hard to physically attract to the Territory.

64.   The vision should also encompass recognition that the environment of the Territory demands decisions about, and new designs for appropriate hardware that can survive the conditions, and software 'fit for purpose' and current and future technological competence. Innovative models of local enterprise for timely maintenance and repairs are required.

65.   The challenges presented by vast regions of desert and tropical savannah country, small, dispersed populations and cultural diversity that characterise the Territory arguably present more parallels with the contexts of developing countries than with other states in Australia. In this sense, leveraging the potential of ICTs needs to be more about development – economic, educational, environmental, health, community participation – than 'technologising' the office or the classroom. In the Northern Territory the digital divide, the disparity between the 'connected' and the 'unplugged', is perhaps higher than any other jurisdiction in Australia. That the divide also coalesces as a cultural divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians is of great concern, and threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities.

66.   Economic development and economic participation are core concerns of the Territory Government. At the heart of this must be an education that fosters engagement both locally and globally. We need to nourish an educational orbit for young people, one that assists in negotiating the learning/earning divide. While ICTs will never be the panacea, if the technical sustainability challenge can be met, they do offer great potential for transforming educational and other services to Indigenous and remote people. The key to this transformation includes leveraging ICTs to support innovative models of pedagogical practice in schools and learning precincts, to value add to interaction between teachers, students, parents, experts and communities and critically, to enable students to engage in new models of enterprise, work and capacity building.

67.   Uptake of ICTs in development contexts around the world points to the critical issue of enabling local and relevant content. The review team is aware of a number of instances where Indigenous people are already accessing ICTs for Internet banking

and communicating with services like Centrelink. Many Indigenous art centres and schools have developed their own websites for communicating or marketing to the world. The use of digital photos and film clips within community schools was evident and could be utilised to further propel positive images and better understandings of Indigenous people beyond current confines.

68.   There are currently a number of initiatives under way that relate to the Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) of the Commonwealth Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA). As part of the initial research for the TAPRIC, recommendations included the rollout of Community Access Centres (CACs) in hub communities. Accordingly, the action plan is investigating sustainable business models for the CACs and developing educational toolkits to support Indigenous people in using them. A second project is one of delivering mobile training in using ICTs and CACs to remote Indigenous communities, and also investigating the development of local content. The review notes that this is yet another initiative trying to integrate several types of services, including education, as the means for making explicit their potential use and purpose to young people and families. Precincts will need to operate in conjunction with as many such projects as they can, and also help to determine what will be the infrastructure synergies between these new centres and existing technologies in their communities.

69.   Unlike its introduction in most other industries, education unfortunately tends to be half-hearted in the introduction of ICTs and in particular, computer technology. It can tend to try to do too much with too little, and spread resources thinly rather than focus where the need is great and the development has been accomplished. The Territory, has tried to use it to communicate among staff, as a prime means of communication for the system as a whole, as a source of information for staff and students, and as an interactive teaching medium. All of these are commendable uses, and will over the years become increasingly commonplace and effective.

70.   This by no means the case yet, and the introduction of the LATIS system, while highly commendable in conception, has at times fallen short of delivering what was intended. It works well in those schools where there are keen, well-trained (either self-trained or more formally) teachers or technicians to help those with limited knowledge, but in many schools it has not delivered anywhere near to its potential. The stages that we have identified in an educational system coming to terms with computer based communication and teaching are as follows

- understanding what the system can deliver and each staff member's role in its use

- each individual staff member becoming skilled in its use as a communication medium through email, and through the major communications between employer and staff member occurring by this means
- exploring the use of the Internet in the classroom to obtain essential teaching information
- students and teachers together obtaining significant information from the Internet and student records all available on the school website
- teachers, through the Internet, tapping into teaching materials that are already prepared and suit the pedagogy of what is to be taught
- teachers developing their own online tests, teaching materials, and interactive materials to enrich their pedagogy.

Not all staff and students will ever be comfortable with all of this; some will take to it much more quickly than others. There will need to be communities of expertise developed so that staff in particular can learn from each other, and often from students who have computers at home.

71.   It would be more effective to separate the pedagogical uses of ICT from the administrative, communication, information retrieval, and general management uses. The first should be part of the activities of the Teaching and Learning Support Division proposed in Chapter 11, and the second remain within the responsibilities of the DEET administration.

Bandwidth

72.   All we have said about ICT is only possible if there is sufficient bandwidth to do the job. The analogy with roads may be helpful. Initially, narrow roads are constructed which permit travel, but only slowly and with small loads. As needs increase, so does the carrying capacity of the road, until eventually multi-lane super highways become the norm. By analogy, exceptional benefits are possible by providing higher digital bandwidth. Services that would become available include: virtual classrooms; distance learning programs by videoconferencing on the desktop; increased subject choice; providing continuing professional education, support and information; enabling enhanced general administration of distance delivery; and improving student access to discussion and feedback with their teachers, and to careers advisers and counsellors. Through the Schools Online Curriculum Content Initiative (SOCCI), the Commonwealth, state and territory governments are investing $68.2 million to develop high quality online curriculum content. In order to gain optimal access to such online material, young people need to have reliable access to dial-up Internet services, and DEET is working to address this issue.

73.   The potential for advanced telecommunications to stimulate major improvements in the education sector has been strongly emphasised by various telecommunications and ICT inquiries over the past few years (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002). It has been argued for other states, and certainly applies in the NT, that online education has the potential to help small schools in regional and remote Australia offer a range of services more akin to those offered in metropolitan areas, and that this could increase literacy and retention rates, as well as allow students in remote Australia to obtain, through virtual classrooms and online teaching services, access to the advanced level maths and science teaching they need to obtain a better TER. Since the VET sector is now also undertaking a study on the needs of that sector, increased bandwidth should also allow greater access to vocational education courses in future.

74.   At its July 2002 meeting, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) agreed to place a priority on the provision of high bandwidth to schools, including the development of a national action plan. This is essentially an issue of equitable access for education users in regional, rural and remote areas to the standard higher bandwidth services, such as Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) that are readily available in metropolitan Australia. The review team believes there would be real benefits to remote schools if they were included in any broad Government support program to improve access to higher bandwidth services in regional, rural and remote Australia.

75.   For schools and other agencies in small communities, where services for multiple users need to be provided, there are significant additional costs for managed services, such as Internet Provider (IP) addresses, firewalls, specialist software and the like. The review team is strongly of the view that for schools on remote communities such costs should be supported through integrated service arrangements with other agencies such as health and police, so that such services could be managed centrally either for each community, or for each learning precinct. Several recent enquiries have noted that when governments aggregate demand across sectors, or in regions, in improved services and outcomes result, and it allows them to obtain extremely competitive prices for broadband services.

76.   It was also noted in the Regional Telecommunications Inquiry (2002) that benefits obtained for education and other users in regional, rural and remote areas must be made broadly available to the wider community, and that training is essential for the take-up of advanced telecommunications. That inquiry recommended that the Commonwealth Government should consider providing ongoing support for IT training and support services in rural and remote areas of Australia, and that that support should build on existing programs, such as Networking the Nation and state and territory based initiatives.

77.   The NCF is developing and testing collaborative approaches, including the bundling of demand to provide higher bandwidth services. One of the projects funded by the NCF is a joint project between NSW and the NT, on Interactive e-Learning. This is establishing a shared broadband Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) communications infrastructure for small rural communities and isolated homesteads in areas of New South Wales and the Northern Territory. This infrastructure will deliver education services to School of the Air and distance education students, isolated Indigenous communities, TAFE outreach students and adults seeking vocational education. Although yet to be fully implemented, the various NCF approaches may make supply of high bandwidth services to the general community in regional, rural and remote areas more commercially attractive.

78.   The strategic use of other grant monies, such as those identified for local content development and enhanced ICT training activities should be prioritised, particularly to support the development of Language Nests, Indigenous Knowledge Centres and innovative education content to support livelihoods and enterprise development.

79.   There is great room for improvement in the delivery of secondary education as a service to many NT towns and communities, especially those in remote locations. Conversely, there is great opportunity to be innovative and creative in finding solutions and alternatives that are designed to fit more closely the needs and aspirations of the young people and their communities. Many possibilities are opening up in ways they never have before, particularly in terms of joining forces with other schools and communities, other service agencies, and other education providers, to work out coordinated and collaborative approaches to a variety of issues, including that of managing and delivering a relevant and exciting secondary education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving Service Delivery

It is recommended that

32. NT DEET, as part of its responsibilities to oversee the formation of learning precincts, work closely with <u>urban</u> and <u>regional</u> schools and learning precincts to develop and implement a strategic plan of infrastructure utilisation, maintenance, re-modelling and rollout to support the range of new pedagogies proposed by this review.

33. NT DEET, together with schools and learning precincts, develop a strategic plan for infrastructure utilisation, maintenance, and remodelling for <u>remote</u> areas, and for the staged rollout of new secondary education service delivery for Indigenous young people in remote areas based on the size of the student cohort, and on community commitment to and readiness for secondary education, informed by current student attendance and MAP data. The provision must

　a. meet standards for infrastructure that are equivalent to those offered in urban and regional areas but specifically designed to meet pedagogical, cultural and community needs

　• involve whole-of-government discussion forums as part of Phases One and Two of precinct development, so that all services can come together to facilitate more appropriate and cost effective shared infrastructure planning

　• include a formal agreement at Phase Two of precinct development, between NT DEET and the community/communities where the stakeholders are open about their expectations of secondary education

　• involve extensive consultation, particularly at Phases Two and Three of precinct development, to design a model or models that meet the education and training needs of the particular community or communities. These could include traditional secondary models, regional or hub boarding schools, and any of the solutions suggested in this report, or new ones that the process of consultation might devise

　• include establishment grants for new sites, particularly in relation to the provision of remote hub boarding schools or other new infrastructure as above, but also in terms of developing service delivery and resource materials in places where there has been no provision of secondary education in the past.

34. as a matter of priority the NT Government develop a strategic approach to the provision of accommodation and transport for education staff working in remote areas that is equivalent to that offered by other agencies and is responsive to changing needs.

35.   to improve the delivery of vocational and enterprise learning and VET programs to all students in the Territory, NT DEET

- as part of the development of Learning Precinct strategic plans for secondary delivery, work closely with each school or precinct, to develop and enhance the provision of enterprise and vocational learning, and VET, taking into consideration alternatives provided in this report
- require that learning precincts foster livelihood activities, small enterprises or work opportunities for students in cooperation and partnership with their communities
- set aside funds each year to be used for enterprise establishment grants, to be allocated to enterprise development projects proposed by students, classes and schools, or learning precincts
- negotiate with ANTA so there is no impediment to effective delivery of VET programs, particularly for remote precincts.

36.   to improve student and teacher access to and use of ICT, NT DEET

- divide its ICT section of into two parts: one to manage the administration requirements of the department and schools; the other to support schools in developing appropriate pedagogy, materials and online services to assist in teaching the curriculum wherever secondary education is taking place, with this second group moving to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division
- work closely with each school and Learning Precinct to enhance ICT and to develop their effectiveness as users for normal communication within the school and precinct, and with the department
- require the schools or Learning Precincts to prepare a plan so that all members of staff are skilled in ICT use and undertake all normal communication via this medium by the commencement of the 2007 teaching year
- require the schools or Learning Precincts to develop an ICT strategic plan for the introduction and consolidation of ICT in its pedagogy, materials and on-line services
- make provision so that each individual teacher in every NT secondary school has ready access to a new computer, via a computer on each full time teacher's desk, and so that each teacher knows how to use it by the beginning of the 2007 teaching year
- make provision for effective maintenance and industry standard software upgrade to keep all computers operating effectively
- seek Commonwealth funding so that all secondary education providers in the NT have access to adequate bandwidth
- make provision for ICT service support in secondary schools to enable effective interactive distance learning and Internet access

- take note of and implement findings of current Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) projects under way, including the Business Viability Study and the Mobile Education and Training Project.

37. in order to achieve better ICT services through aggregated bandwidth, the NT Government require that all its sectors and agencies work together to support online access centres in regional and remote communities and to enable these community facilities to remain viable.

CHAPTER 11
RE-SHAPING THE SYSTEM

Strong leadership, effective communication and sound teamwork at all levels underpin a quality education system.

The application of resources depends on determining priorities based on principles of equity and effectiveness.

The first call on resources is to meet the pedagogical needs of the students irrespective of the place where they are learning.

1.   Earlier chapters of this report have described the changes to be made to NT secondary education—to classroom pedagogies, to the organisation of stages of schooling and the nature of the learning required during those stages, and to how schools should work together to optimise the range of learning opportunities and pathways available to young people. They have also described what needs to be done to increase the capacity and capability of the people and the organisations engaged in the secondary education enterprise, and to improve service delivery across the Territory.

2.   These are significant changes, and will place considerable demands on school communities. They will be required to use their knowledge and expertise to lead the transformation that this review proposes. It is imperative, therefore, that they are given timely and effective assistance with the important implementation tasks that lie ahead. A critical role for Government will be to support school communities in their work to improve teaching and learning. The bulk of this support will come from DEET's leadership team and their office-based staff. Support for the changes must come from all levels of the Department, and particularly from its Chief Executive (CE)—his high level support throughout the review augurs well for its future implementation.

3.   This chapter addresses the departmental support that will be required and flags the need for some cultural and structural changes for effective implementation of the review recommendations. Comments to the review that the DEET leadership is driving a demanding program of change on multiple fronts, stretching its resources to the limit to tackle a large number of major challenges across its business areas, without yet knowing the demands of this review, led us to conclude that these matters must be given very serious consideration.

4.   Review respondents suggested that DEET's efforts should be *more focused on agreed priorities*, and that *change management processes and practices need to be improved*. Questions

were raised about the system's ability to manage change in a way that engages schools and their communities, other education providers, government agencies and community organisations. These stakeholder concerns were substantiated by a recent review report on change management in DEET, which found that at present *no formal change planning systems and procedures are in place* (Stirrat, 2003, p.4). Even so, the review team found that there was genuine respect for the leadership of the Department and general support for the directions being pursued. Teachers spoke highly of the teachers' discussion forums[22] that the CE has introduced, and his commitment to leadership development across the organisation via a range of programs. Even so, as with most organisations, there were pockets needing attention.

5.   Consideration of these matters may appear to exceed our terms of reference. However, the fourth term of reference charged the review to 'identify and assess internal and external impacts on current and future secondary education provision in the NT, and make recommendations for ways to address these'. If the Government accepts the recommendations of this review, a significant change agenda will require implementation and DEET must position itself to achieve this. New functions, systems and processes will have to be introduced at the system level, and the current structure will need to be re-focused for the optimum provision of services to schools and learning precincts. We have already argued for an integrated services approach at the school and learning precinct level. The whole of DEET management must lead by example and adopt such an approach in head office, both for its internal operations and for the way it works with external stakeholder groups. As quoted earlier in this report

> *Our main game is and always should be pedagogy – teaching and learning in the face-to-face setting of classrooms. This is teachers' work. … This is where student 'outcomes' – whether we define them in terms of skills, knowledges, attitudes, social practices, behaviours, ideologies, identities – get shaped*

and the author goes on to say

> *So all of our policy efforts, any structuring and restructuring, all of what we do as bureaucrats, administrators, support and clerical staff, need to focus on setting enabling conditions for that to happen. At times, that means intervention, at times it means getting out of the way.*

(Luke, 1999, p.3)

Current structure and function of DEET

6.   The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) is the government agency responsible for the delivery of efficient, effective and accountable education and training services in the Northern Territory. It employs approximately 4 400 staff (approximately 3 600 FTEs[23]), of

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[22] Teachers' Discussion Forums are held in conjunction with the monthly Executive Board meetings. These meetings are not confined to Darwin, but are also held in each of the other major centres twice a year. Local teachers are invited to meet with the CEO and Executive Board members in a forum that enables them to meet senior management face-to-face, where they can ask questions and raise issues for discussion.

[23] FTE = full-time equivalent positions

whom approximately 3 900 work in schools across the NT. Of these, approximately 1 500 work in schools where secondary-aged students are enrolled. The remaining 500 staff work in 'head office', with the bulk located in Darwin, and a small number based in regional offices in Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy.

7.   DEET is led and managed by a Chief Executive (CE) and an internal Executive Board, supported by various advisory boards, councils and committees. The functions of these support bodies are summarised in the DEET Corporate Governance Handbook (June 2002, pp.12-16). The handbook does not detail the functions of the Department's Executive Board. This is taken up in Chapter 12.

8.   Like most large Government agencies, DEET's head office is organised into a series of divisions and branches, most of which provide to a greater or lesser degree, professional or corporate support to schools. The head office structure underwent major change in November 2001 when the new Government amalgamated the former NT Department of Education (NTDE) with the NT Employment and Training Authority (NTETA) and the Work Health Authority to form the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

9.   A copy of the current organisational chart is included at the end of this chapter. Until now, a standard 'run of the mill' education department structure has served the needs of the schooling system in the NT well enough. But the vision for education presented in this report requires a new kind of organisation to achieve and maintain it. It is the team's view that any re-structure of head office should allow for a strong focus on supporting the work of Learning Precincts, and the gradual transfer of responsibilities out to them as they become ready to take them on. Over time this could mean the transfer of a range of responsibilities of some office staff to precincts, to 'where the action is', and therefore the monitoring of which positions are best placed where should become a regular item on the Executive's agenda.

10.   To provide a backdrop for the systemic changes proposed by the review, the next several paragraphs provide brief outlines of the current school support functions of a number of individual divisions and branches spread across the organisation. The information is taken in large part from 'fact sheets' prepared by these branches and published for the 2003 Leaders' Forum[24]. The review team acknowledges there are other branches not mentioned here that also interact with schools to some degree.

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[24] The Leaders' Forum is a conference of principals, assistant principals and other senior departmental officers that is held in Darwin each year during the mid-semester break at the end of Term 1.

11.   The divisions that have the most significant role to play in supporting schools are the Schools Division, led by three General Managers who report to one of the Department's two Deputy CEs, and School Services Division which is led by a General Manager who reports to the CE. The latter division includes Student Services and Curriculum Services Branches.

12.   **Schools Division** provides information and advice on school policies, procedures and protocols, and is the central point for communication to and from schools for the department's Executive and the Government. It is responsible for facilitating the implementation of the department's Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy and the School Attendance Officers initiative and for reporting on these, as well as for liaison with School Councils. This division also includes the recently formed Capability Development Unit, a small unit that coordinates systemic support for schools identified as 'at risk'. At the time of writing the Unit is working with schools in the Top End only.

13.   In **School Services Division**, Student Services Branch advises and supports schools, students and parents, focusing on appropriate learning outcomes for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and special needs; and Curriculum Services Branch collaborates with all schools and clusters to provide professional support for the development of curriculum, assessment and reporting. There are Curriculum Services officers in all regional Territory centres. The branch has teams responsible for the following areas: Early Years, Middle Years, Senior Years, Layer 2 (NTCF materials), English as a Second Language (ESL), Literacy and Numeracy, and the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP).

14.   Other divisions and branches that have an impact on schools include the Indigenous Education Division, the People and Learning Branch (recently formed through the amalgamation of the Human Resource Services and the Strategic and Leadership Development Branches), and IT Services Branch, all of which report to a Deputy CE.

15.   **Indigenous Education Division** drives the implementation by other branches, divisions and areas of Government, of the recommendations from the *Learning Lessons* report and the strategies in the Indigenous Education Strategic Plan. It also manages a number of specific purpose initiatives including the Indigenous Teacher Education Salary Scheme (ITESS), the Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker (AIEW) project, the Aboriginal Resource Officer (ARO) project, cadetships for Indigenous students undertaking tertiary qualifications in education, provision of resource grants to schools for local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students, the Mobile Preschool Pilot Program, and the Two Way Learning Program.

16.   The **People and Learning Branch** (P&L) provides information, advice and assistance on employee relations, oversees workforce management, including recruitment and retention and performance programs such as probation, performance management and Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEP), and oversees records management for the whole department. It also plans, facilitates, evaluates and provides advice on professional learning and workforce development for all DEET staff. Its programs include teacher development programs that support teacher excellence, for example orientation Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program (QTP); organisational development programs, for example Approved Student Status, Indigenous Capacity Building, Workforce Development Strategy; leadership development programs, for example, DEET Leaders' Forum, Leadership Development Program (LDP), Emerging Leaders Program (ELP); and Learning for the Future which supports teacher professional learning in ICT integration, for example Technology Enhanced Curriculum Classrooms (TECC), Lighthouse Schools Project, learning and technology resource development.

17.   In relation to schools, **IT Services Branch** develops and provisions a range of online services to support, promote and enhance education, so that Information Communications Technology is effectively used. It is responsible for the LATIS (Learning and Technology in Schools) project. Branch functions include management and coordination of school ICT training and professional development for teachers, implementation of the Student Administration and Management System (SAMS) to align all schools to common data collection and tracking of student details, supporting opportunities for online experiences that enhance teaching and learning in support of the NTCF, and implementation of system-wide technology initiatives for DEET schools.

18.   Some parts of the Employment and Training Division, particularly the School to Work area, also have an impact on schools, as do the Business Planning and Information Division and Financial Services Branch. The **Employment and Training Division** provides leadership and strategic direction for the VET sector. Its School to Work Unit aims to facilitate opportunities for all youth aged 14 to 19 years to participate in appropriate vocational, career and enterprise initiatives that will improve their transition to work. The unit is responsible for developing policy and strategies, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating activities, and collating and analysing data related to vocational programs. These programs include VET in Schools, Training for Remote Youth (TRY), School Based New Apprenticeships, Enterprise Education, Vocational Learning, Career Education, and Driver Training and Licensing (DTAL). At the time of writing, the Employment and Training Division is undergoing a re-structure, but the review anticipates the functions listed here will be retained in the re-designed organisation.

19.   The **Business Planning and Information Division** assists schools by providing planning and review services, and business information services. It is currently developing a School Planning

and Accountability Framework, and has responsibility for linking all levels of planning activity in DEET with the Corporate Planning Framework. This involves the introduction of business plans at all levels of the organisation, including schools and clusters. The division provides support to Clusters in the development of their plans.

20.   The division is also responsible for coordinating and resourcing the ongoing development, organisation and maintenance of a central repository for corporate datasets. Its work incorporates collecting, analysing and reporting on a variety of data that relate to schools. This includes enrolment projection data, enrolment and attendance, ESL, Student Competencies, NTCE, MAP, new apprenticeships and VET; and also the staff census and professional development. Most of these collections are made to provide data for other organisations, and/or for purposes of external reporting, although all data from a school are reported back to it for verification and for its own information. Other parts of the department also collect data, for example P&L manages the Teacher Information System, Schools Division manages the Student Suspensions database, Student Services maintains its own database which records service delivery details for individual students and for schools, and Curriculum Services Branch manages NTCE-related data.

21.   **Financial Services Branch** provides advice and support on financial, budgetary and infrastructure matters. The Budgets Section prepares and monitors employee expenses budgets based on approved school staffing levels and liaises with the General Managers Schools about specific operational budget requirements for schools; the Infrastructure Section is responsible for the department's building and property management needs, including repairs and infrastructure maintenance, minor new works, capital works and housing programs; and the Accounting Services Section undertakes a range of administrative functions including disbursement of schools grants, for example Dollar for Dollar, School Devolution Grants, Commonwealth Grants.

The quality of system support for schools

22.   It was clear to the review that some divisions and branches in the department or individuals in them provide excellent support. But as with any bureaucracy, dissatisfaction was expressed to varying degrees with the quality of support provided by some branches and divisions, and with current structural arrangements. There were signs of too fragmented an approach to their work with schools.

23.   Some very favourable comments were made about visits by cooperative teams of advisers from both Curriculum Services and Student Services Branches because this team approach enables some advisers to cover classes while teachers work with other advisers. Schools value such an approach as it minimises the time teachers are out of their classrooms, allows them

access to professional support on site, and addresses the lack of relief teachers that can be an issue in some of the regional and remote schools.

24   The work being undertaken by the recently established Capability Development Unit in Schools Division, which is taking the approach of auditing schools identified as 'at risk'[25] to document the particular challenges they are facing, was judged to be particularly effective. Members of the unit work with schools to develop action plans and then coordinate appropriate systemic specialist support as required. The final phase is monitoring the implementation of their improvement plans. However, the small size of the unit limits its sphere of operations, and the review considers that such a unit should be in a position to work with schools across the Territory, and not just in the Top End.

25.   Staff in many schools were critical that the department does not always provide the kind of support that they would like. It was acknowledged that *there are lots [of office-based staff] working hard, but the systems, structures and processes need fixing*. Principals and teachers, particularly in regional and remote schools, expressed frustration with what they often saw as the *uncoordinated and ad hoc manner in which support is offered and provided*, and suggestions were made that *DEET needs a strategic plan for coordinated school support*.

26.   There is a view, that the General Managers Schools *are spread too thin* and are *too focused on day-to-day operational matters*, preventing them from providing greater vision and leadership. Even so, they have initiated important strategic projects, for example, the Capability Development Unit, or have taken on responsibility for implementation of a major strategy, for example, Secondary Indigenous Education Strategy.

27.   A more strategic approach at the system level was also sought by the Reference Group who suggested that strategic planning in DEET needs to take account of the interests of Catholic and independent as well as public sector schools in the NT and to signal key changes to all stakeholders well in advance (2003, p.23).

28.   Bureaucratic organisations have a tendency to be opaque to outsiders. The divisions and branches and their dispersion across the department can be bewildering for people in schools who wish to access information or support, and sometimes they feel like they are *given the 'run-around'*. Parents and other members of the community who try to obtain information or advice find it even more difficult. This is exacerbated by the quality of the DEET website, particularly the way it is organised and the amount of outdated information on it. For example, Defence families wanting to investigate educational opportunities before moving to the Territory find that the

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[25] 'Schools at Risk' are identified through the evaluation of data collected by DEET. Schools may also self-nominate for assistance.

website is not at all helpful. There is a perception that the site mirrors a lack of coordination between the 'silos' in the department.

29.   Earlier chapters of this report have documented the desire of schools for assistance with translating the NTCF into effective classroom practice, and for improvements in staff recruitment and targeted professional development in areas of need. Particular areas of concern about system support for schools included a perception that Student Services and, to a lesser degree Curriculum Services, are more focused on primary schools, which makes it difficult for secondary schools to access their support to the degree that they would like. The review was told that it is difficult to have secondary students assessed and to access intervention support for them, and that the STAR Centre[26] does not provide the kinds of behaviour management support needed for high school students. Staff in those two branches, however, said that they have made consistent efforts to engage with secondary schools, but their offers of support are not always taken up.

30.   Senior secondary teachers and teachers in regional and remote schools in particular expressed the need for increased assistance with curriculum implementation. The review team noted first hand and can understand concerns expressed by teachers, students and parents about the quality and appropriateness of the curriculum materials available to students studying via distance mode and of the inadequacy of support being provided to teachers and students who have to work with these materials (see Chapter 6).

31.   Frustration was evident in schools caused by the lack of communication between personnel working on different programs targeting the same groups of students, for example work being done for Indigenous students in Curriculum Services Branch, in Indigenous Education Division, and in Employment and Training Division; and the development of curriculum materials and online resources, as exemplified by the comment from a teacher who asked, *Why don't S&LD, LATIS, CSB and NTOEC work together? They need a more strategic and coordinated approach*.

32.   The review team learned that DEET has not had a dedicated central policy area since Schools Policy Branch was disbanded after the 1998 Education Review, and that policy development now occurs in divisions and branches at their discretion and using a variety of approaches. We saw no standard procedures for policy development, implementation or review, and some staff were uncertain about the status of various policies, where the most current versions can be accessed, and what support for their implementation, if any, is available, for example gifted and talented, parents as partners. There was also concern expressed by schools and external organisations about the lack of policy in the NT in some key areas. These included

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[26] STAR (**ST**udents **A**t **R**isk) Centres are operated in Alice Springs and Darwin by the Student Services Branch Behaviour Management Unit. They provide opportunities for students to be withdrawn to a safe and secure location where they receive counselling and guidance in order to re-enter the school and classroom environment and to learn to manage their own behaviour.

- VET — *There is no clear policy for secondary VET programs, and policy and procedures for school based new apprenticeships are either unclear or non-existent*
- School feeder zones — *Defence families need a clear policy about where their children can go to school, and this needs to b*e made available on the website and to be applied consistently
- Provision of secondary education in remote areas — *In the absence of any overarching policy on the provision of compulsory school-age secondary education for remote area Indigenous students, what is in place is haphazard and ad hoc, driven by teachers and principals desperate to provide a service with few options or resources.*

33. The review team believes that, if its recommendations are to be implemented most effectively, DEET must identify an appropriate functional area to be responsible for developing and monitoring agreed management processes for policy development, implementation and review, and for establishing and maintaining a central repository of all departmental policies. The area could also be required to provide appropriate training to relevant staff across the organisation with policy development responsibilities.

34. Some schools expressed a desire for increased support to help them analyse and interpret data for instructional and curricular purposes, and to inform planning and decision-making. Chapter 5 has described the importance of making data available to schools, and pointed out the need to provide professional development for them on how to interpret and evaluate this data for planning purposes and for reporting to stakeholders.

Focusing system support for the work of schools and precincts

35. Chapter 8 proposed a 'new' DEET that will support rather than direct secondary education in the NT, and suggested that eventually this will require substantial behaviour changes in the department's responsibilities and authorities and in the way it goes about its business. In the more immediate future, strong system support will be needed for an increased focus on pedagogy system-wide and for the establishment of precincts. DEET must be able to provide ongoing support to precincts at the planning, development, implementation and review stages. This will require an organisation with the capacity, capability and agility to react to a range of unique local needs, and to intervene as appropriate in schools or precincts that may be struggling to deliver on their business plans.

An integrated approach to system support for teaching and learning in schools

36. As described in previous sections of this report, schools believe that systems to support them could be better coordinated, more widely accessible, and more strategically targeted to address their needs. Implementation of the recommendations this review is making about an increased
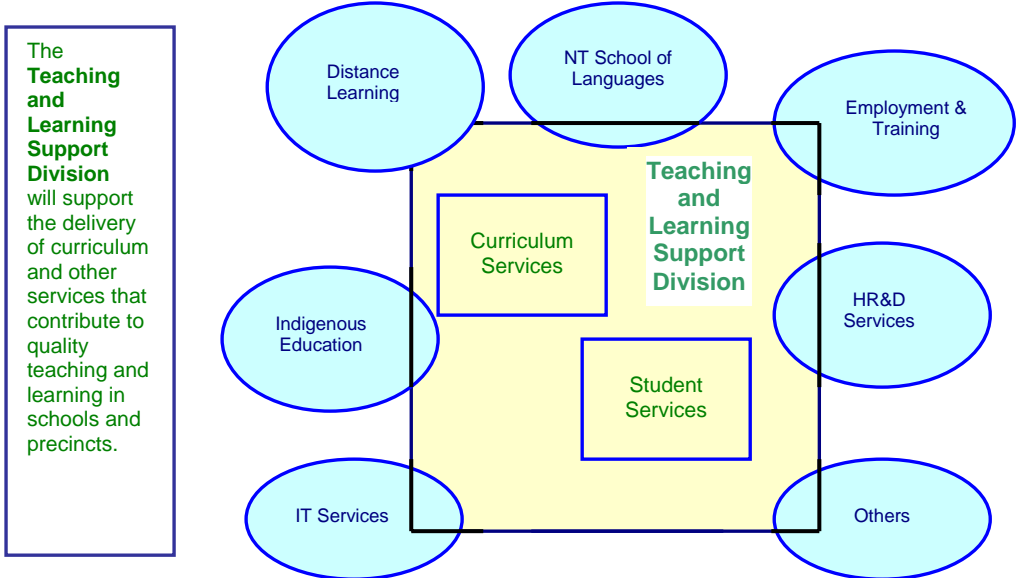
focus on pedagogy system-wide and the shifts in teaching and learning required by the proposed stages of schooling, will make significant demands on schools. So will the requirements for schools and precincts to offer a greater range of pathways for young people through a variety of modes, and to increase their engagement with enterprises, workplaces and the wider community. It will therefore be imperative for current system support arrangements to be re-structured and re-focused so that schools are optimally supported in the changes they will be required to make.

37. The review team believes that a number of areas in the current DEET structure should be brought together to provide integrated support, to develop the pedagogical framework we are recommending, and to assist schools with its implementation. The areas would include all those that have as their major aim the quality of the delivery of teaching and learning in schools. An audit of the department is required to identify all the appropriate areas, but they would likely include Curriculum Services and Student Services, providers of on-line services from NTOEC and IT Services, and relevant areas from People and Learning Division, Indigenous Education Division and Employment and Training Division. Teaching and learning support and curriculum development aspects of services that are currently the province of the open access schools, i.e. the NT Music School, the NT School of Languages, and the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC), as discussed in Chapter 6, should also be included.

38. A new Teaching and Learning Support Division should be designed and set up primarily to respond to requests for assistance from schools and precincts. It should also contribute to the provision of targeted assistance to schools and precincts identified as in need of help with their pedagogy through system assessment processes. Building on the emerging practice that is being modelled by Curriculum Services and Student Services Branches, more multi-faceted teams can be put together to work with schools for sustained periods of time, providing intensive assistance to improve various aspects of their teaching and learning practices. Strong links should be made between this section and Charles Darwin University (CDU), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and the Desert People's Centre (DPC), and with the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA).

39. In order to provide the most responsive support to the various precincts and their schools, staff in the new section should not all be based in offices in Darwin or Alice Springs. Darwin staff could maintain a base in the office, but be located in schools within the urban precincts for extended periods of time, depending on the needs of those precincts. The review endorses the statement in the submission from the Australian Education Union (AEU NT), that e*ducators in rural and remote locations must have access to quality professional development opportunities and support from specialist advisers.*

40.   Curriculum Services Branch has already led the way in regionalising its support, and this approach should be maintained, as it will mean that support staff have greater knowledge and understanding of the contexts of the schools in which they will be engaged. A teacher in a regional high school informed the review that *to further your career you need to go to Darwin. Our local education office has been downsized and there's reduced potential for local teachers to move into other areas.* Regionalisation will address this issue to some degree as it will provide improved career pathways for teachers and other staff working in the precincts, offering increased opportunities to gain experience in office-based positions through, for example, secondments or part-office/part-school arrangements.

41.   A regionalised approach does not necessarily mean the establishment of a management hierarchy in each region. In the review team's opinion, the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the support staff based in regional centres could be allocated to the relevant Head of Precinct. This would, of course, require clarification of line management responsibilities for staff who are members of the Teaching and Learning Support Division but whose day-to-day responsibilities would be overseen by the Head of Precinct.

42.   Bringing together the teaching and learning support functions will enable duplication to be eliminated and services to be streamlined, and any resulting resource savings should be re-directed to facilitate increased system support for the establishment and operation of the precincts recommended by this review. Stronger connections can also be made with regional offices of CDU, BIITE and DPC.

The **Teaching and Learning Support Division** will support the delivery of curriculum and other services that contribute to quality teaching and learning in schools and precincts.

Distance Learning

NT School of Languages

Employment & Training

Teaching and Learning Support Division

Curriculum Services

HR&D Services

Indigenous Education

Student Services

IT Services

Others

43.   The purpose of this division is to support the delivery of curriculum and other services that contribute to exemplary pedagogy at the points of interface with students. This may be to support direct face-to-face teaching, ICT and online services, various modes of teaching at a distance, or to interface with enterprises, workplaces and communities. Its services should cater for the needs of students across the full spectrum of abilities, including gifted students and those with special talents or learning difficulties.

Improved collection, analysis and use of data

44.   As recognised in the approach adopted by the Capability Development Unit, the effective use of evidence-based processes, including data, is an essential component of school improvement. Schools and precincts need access to a range of both qualitative and quantitative data that reflects their contexts, to enable them to identify areas for improvement in student learning, as well as in other aspects of their operations. Stakeholder perception surveys, for example, are used by other Australian education systems to provide useful qualitative data, but these do not currently form part of DEET's data collection program.

45.   Performance data linked to agreed standards and benchmarks can inform school development plans and help measure increases in effectiveness. The system has made substantial progress in this area in recent times, although much of the data is still only collected at summary levels, and not at student unit level. As Chapter 4 pointed out, individual student performance data should also be available to enable tracking of students and measuring of learning growth, and work is being done in DEET to achieve this. Such data can also contribute to the assessment of school and precinct effectiveness, as can student destination data, although this is currently collected in a very limited way.

46.   The review team believes that at present an insufficient range of useful data is collected by the system and made available to schools. Parents and the community too should have access to a greater range of data than is currently made publicly available. As one parent told the review, *parents and councils should have access to real information about how the school is travelling*. This does not mean that the review is recommending 'league tables'. It means being open with parents about how schools are 'value adding' to their children. Other jurisdictions, for example Victoria and Western Australia, have longer-established, more well-developed systems for data collection, analysis and reporting, as well as effective processes for working with schools to assist them to interpret their data and use it to inform their planning and reporting. The review obtained a sample copy of a 2002 School Level Report that illustrates the kind of data provided to Victorian schools by the Student Outcomes Division of the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

The datasets it contains include 'like' school group charts, a range of achievement data from Year 7 to year 12, enrolments, student absence, apparent and real retention, exit destinations, parent opinion, staff opinion, teacher sick leave. Schools are given assistance in interpreting the data and using it in their planning. Western Australia has also developed measures of the social outcomes of schooling.

47.   An increased range of data about schools would assist DEET assess its performance as an education leader, contribute to informed decision making and strategic planning, and enable the department to report more effectively on its performance to Government and the wider community. It is possible that such data could also be used effectively to improve pre-service teacher training.

48.   The review team is of the opinion that the non-Government schools sectors in the NT should also work towards a position where they are able to provide similar evidence to the Governments that fund them, to demonstrate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their schools.

49.   The review team recognises that there have been major attempts in recent times in DEET to improve its system of data collection, particularly through the establishment in 2000 of the Business Planning and Information Division. We heard that *the information culture in DEET has matured in the last couple of years, with most people now willing to share information and use it to inform decision-making and reporting.* Others claimed that evidence used for decision making is often anecdotal and unsupported by hard data, and that some data seem to be collected for no useful purpose. The recency of the division's establishment partially explains this problem, as does the fact that responsibility for numbers of datasets remains with other parts of the department where they are sometimes developed and maintained by staff with insufficient levels of appropriate expertise. As a result it has been difficult for the team to obtain some of the simplest and most straightforward of data that would allow us to respond confidently to the first two of our terms of reference. Very little in the way of longitudinal data was available, and we shared the frustration of a senior officer in DEET who told us that *the required level of data collection and analysis is not happening.*

50.   It was unfortunate for the review team to find that it could not answer questions that should be basic to decision-making in the department, and are able to be answered with more confidence in other parts of Australia. Without adequate data, systems are prone to decision making based on prejudice, opinion, hearsay, and the strength of the voice of the lobby groups. The review team sees this lack of evidence here as a fundamental flaw in any ability to give the best advice to Government. Very rarely did submissions refer to data and evidence to back their opinion, showing that people in the wider community also had difficulty with a lack of data, or were not

used to backing their positions with support data. The review team found itself in this position more often than it would have liked.

Effective system support for the establishment and operation of precincts

51.   While the development, establishment and operation of Learning Precincts must necessarily be the province of schools and their communities, the review team believes that the system should provide tangible support in a number of ways. We see a need for two units in DEET that will have differing roles to play – one a Precincts Support Unit to work with schools throughout the four phases of precinct implementation, as described in Chapter 7; the other, an expanded Capability Development Unit that will continue to fulfil its current role on a larger canvas, and take up the added responsibility of coordinating responses to recommendations that come from Quality Services Agency audits (see Chapter 12). The Precincts Support Unit should also take on the responsibility of working with community and parent groups such as the Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) to assess and potentially re-define its role in line with the changes proposed by this review.

52.   In addition to the new division and units proposed above, there are new or revised support functions that have been recommended in other chapters of this report that need to be incorporated into DEET's corporate structure. Rather than grafting these on to the existing structural arrangements, the review believes the department should take the opportunity presented by the report's recommendations to re-consider the current organisation and develop a design that allows for the level of flexibility required to respond to the needs of schools and precincts. This is not a proposal to re-structure for the sake of it; rather it is an opportunity for DEET to match its form as closely as possible to the purpose*s* it is seeking to achieve. Various internal and external stakeholders suggested that the appropriate expertise to undertake this design work is not currently available within DEET, and for this reason, as well as for objectivity, the review advises that external expertise be engaged to assist.

53.   Some of the proposed functions can be fulfilled from within existing resources, but the review heard that *there is not sufficient 'fat'*, in some parts of the system at least, to enable more functions to be absorbed. Nor is it likely that all of the requisite expertise is available within present staff. Therefore other functions will require additional human and financial resourcing.

Review implementation

54.   This report proposes an ambitious and complex program of deep and far-reaching change that will require persistent effort over many years. It cannot all happen everywhere immediately. The review team is looking to changes that are driven from classrooms and by teachers, in schools and precincts where the impetus is to improve the process of teaching and learning and the services provided to our young people. To make these kinds of changes to the core business of what secondary education is for and how it is delivered requires high quality change management. The changes we propose will need considerable support if they are to be achieved. And so these goals will not be lost, a specifically dedicated team of change agents needs to be established to work with people in schools and the wider community to implement the change agenda proposed by this review. This team must be able to inspire and motivate people, gain commitment and support among staff and stakeholders, and make sure everyone sees the advantages that will accrue, not only to the young people, but to teachers and parents and the wider community as well.

55.   Team members will have to drive planning and implementation and have effective leadership and team skills to manage change particularly from the top where the CE must demonstrate that the executive are fully committed. The CE will also need to identify key drivers of the change at all levels, and apply resources and effort in a targeted way; he will need to obtain tangible support from other Government agencies; and he will need to have an eye to risk management, ready to step in when a change of direction is needed or when momentum falters. Ongoing support from Government for the changes and Ministers' public support of them as being for the good of the Territory and the development of its human capital will be essential. The team will need adequate support and resourcing if it is to function effectively. But the change cannot become the responsibility of this team alone; it will have to be driven by leaders at all levels.

56.   For the change process to be effective two things are needed
- a high quality implementation team with energy and 'grunt', headed by a person with the appropriate interpersonal and negotiating skills to bring about the changes in a dedicated and positive manner. This person should be a full member of the steering committee. The team should be located in DEET.
- a steering group of key people from DEET and other relevant bodies, to be appointed by the Minister and chaired by the CE of DEET. The group should be small, strategically focused, and have the capacity to actively guide, promote and support the implementation program. It must not be a cumbersome representative body that could hamper progress or divert effort into administrative processes and away from the important tasks to be achieved.

57.   The Reference Group for this review has proposed that a 'think tank' of 'widely respected secondary teachers' be established. As the Reference Group paper states

The most competent, widely respected secondary teachers who know how to achieve small miracles with the students in their care – they are the people whose ideas system officials should listen to most carefully. A small think tank of these valued professionals could bring about some really impressive changes if we entrusted them with the job of spearheading reform.

<div align="right">(Devlin, 2003, p.5)</div>

The review team endorses this proposal and recommends that the steering committee establish such a group but that it also include at least one primary teacher, and that the role of the group be to advise the implementation team of the grass roots effects of the changes as they are implemented.

58. The recommendations of this review rely for their implementation on a group of highly dedicated change agents, supported at all leadership levels in the Territory's education systems. The stakes are high, because to fall short of effective change may be worse for the young people of the NT than no change at all. Changes of the magnitude here, also contemplated or in process in other states, are the essential precursors to an education system that will develop the human capital of the Territory to face the demands of this century's knowledge revolution and the ever-increasing demands for effective services. They will be as important as the 'secondary education for all' catchcry of the last century that served the manufacturing, agriculture, and mining industries so well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Re-shaping the System

It is recommended that

38. NT DEET establish a Teaching and Learning Support Division by bringing together and re-structuring the existing units or functions that focus on the provision of quality services to students and to schools.

39. to improve the collection, analysis and evaluation of data for school improvement, NT DEET
   - strengthen its system of data collection, and that this be achieved through the negotiation of a contract for a specified period with another suitable organisation or jurisdiction for the provision of appropriate advice and expertise to refine current data systems and processes, and suitable training for all DEET staff with data collection and analysis responsibilities
   - assess the resources in the Business Planning and Information Division, and allocate additional resources if appropriate, so that sufficient suitably trained staff are available to provide the full range of necessary data and to assist schools, precincts and the system to use their data most effectively.

40. NT DEET engage the services of an external organisational design expert to work with relevant staff to re-design the current structures. The re-design should result in a head office structure that can: achieve better-integrated, precinct-focused policy and service delivery; minimise fragmentation and improve alignment, coordination and knowledge management across all functional areas; and enhance the culture of the department. It should accommodate all the support functions that have been identified in this review, namely

- a central policy function
- a Teaching and Learning Support Division
- a Precincts Support Unit
- an expanded Capability Development Unit
- a Strategic Teacher Recruitment Unit
- a Research and Innovation Unit
- support for various advisory groups such as the CE's Student Forum
- change management leadership and support
- knowledge management
- partnerships development (MOUs with other agencies and organisations, education providers).

41. to implement the changes proposed in this review the NT Government

- fund the establishment of a team, dedicated specifically to implementation of this review's recommendations. The review implementation team is to be based in NT DEET and report to the Chief Executive, with responsibility for managing the process of planning and implementing those changes proposed in this review as agreed to by the Government; and that the terms of reference of the team be broad, with the delivery of agreed outcomes the major test of its effectiveness
- establish a small steering committee to be chaired by the CE of NT DEET to advise the Minister on all aspects of the implementation of the review, and to be responsible for monitoring that the implementation team is managing the change process effectively and efficiently
- require that a 'think tank' be established by the steering committee, composed of widely respected secondary teachers and at least one primary teacher, to provide advice as requested to the steering committee and the implementation team.

Department of Employment Education and Training

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Executive Assistant

Office of the CEO
Director - Media & Marketing
Director - Ministerial Liaison

Deputy Chief Executive

GM — Indigenous Education

Director — Learning Lessons Implementation

Director — Policy, Planning & Resourcing

Director — IT Services

Director — Consultancy Services

GM — Business Planning and Information

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Director — Strategy Evaluation and Compliance

Director — Employment & Training Services

A/Director — Strategic and Leadership Development

GM — School Services

Director — Student Services

Director — Curriculum Services

Director — NT Worksafe

GM — Central Australia

Deputy Chief Executive

GM — Palmerston & Rural Arnhem Regional Office

Director — Legal Services

GM — Darwin Katherine

GM — Central Australia Alice Springs Tennant Creek

Director — Financial Services

Director — International Services

Approved Chief Executive..........

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CHAPTER 12
QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

> Schools are learning organisations where young people, teachers, other staff, parents, and the wider community all have the opportunity to learn together and share accountability for this learning.
>
> Many people are accountable for what happens in schools: DEET head office staff, principals, teachers and other staff in schools, the students themselves, families and community members.

1.   This chapter explores various aspects of quality in education by outlining responsibilities and accountabilities at various levels in the system, including those of students, their parents and caregivers, teachers and schools, as well as the proposed learning precincts, and suggests possibilities for assessing their effectiveness. Wider accountabilities of DEET, of enterprises and businesses, and of communities to be involved in its effective provision are also explored, as is the need for stakeholders to be assured about the quality of education. To focus on these accountabilities, the review recommend the establishment of a Quality Services Agency to advise the Minister on all aspects of the quality of the system, student outcomes, teachers and other staff, and the schools and precincts themselves. Such agencies are becoming increasingly common elsewhere, and provide evidence and assurance to governments and the community at large of the success of the system, its schools and learning precincts.

Accountability

2.   The word 'accountability' kept cropping up in our consultations, with comments such as

- *We need standards and accountability for outcomes; teachers and schools are not accountable for outcomes*
- *There is no accountability at the end of Year 7 as to what they are supposed to* have learned
- (We need to be) *accountable for the outcomes that will get our kids to the next stage— to let them see the path ahead for them with literacy, and numeracy levels assessed and reported to parents*
- *There is no real accountability anymore. At least when you had moderation at Year 10 and an exam there was some*
- *The NTCF provides for accountability and is heading in the right direction*

- *Schools need to be more accountable, documenting their evidence as part of a more comprehensive evaluation of their programs*
- *When school numbers drop, why aren't principals made accountable?*
- *In Indigenous schools, make young people accountable to their elders for their schooling*
- *Schools need to be accountable to Territory-wide bench marks*
- *Teachers need more financial incentives to teach in the Territory, but they must be more accountable for students' learning*
- *Accountability as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) can treble your workload*
- *Parents need to be more accountable in their child's education. They need to understand that they have a role and that teachers are not solely responsible.*

3. The review was charged on many fronts—by the Reference Group, consultations and submissions, the executive of DEET, parents, employers, and students—to clarify the ramifications of an approach to education that specifies the responsibilities and accountabilities of those concerned. For example, in its paper to the review, the Reference Group stated that *principals and staff need to be accountable for performance goals,* and went on to suggest that the whole system of performance management *needs to be overhauled to bring it in to line with contemporary practice.* More particularly, in pulling together these threads the review team came to a conclusion that the review team needed to propose a system that would allow for the diversity we found in secondary schools, while at the same time being able to reassure parents and the community at large that high standards and quality were being achieved.

4. The word 'quality' also found its way into our discussions with schools and stakeholders, with there being an almost universal concern that the quality of secondary education in the Territory had to be high, to serve the interests of the students and their families and the future development of the Northern Territory as a whole. There were many references to the quality of teachers, with comments like
- *We need to get good quality teachers who aspire to achieve quality outcomes in students*
- *I'd prefer to see quality rather than quantity in teachers*
- *Quality teaching staff are hard to get as we compete with the other states*
- *It is almost impossible to get quality people trained for the job*
- *Is there a capacity to appoint teacher mentors, because many of them are not adequate to the task?*
- *They feel they do not have as many benchmarks to judge the quality of their work in this system…*

- *The focus must be on the quality of teachers, not just numbers and bodies*
- *You have to have quality teachers dedicated to engaging adolescents.*

5.   The word *quality* was also used in contexts such as the following

- *Quality primary leads to real secondary leads to…*
- *We need to ensure that quality education applies universally, not just to targeted groups*
- *We should look at other models of quality school assurance. Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand have completed recent ones*
- *There is a lot of existing work on the Year 7 to 8 transition, but it is not systemic and is of variable quality…*
- *We should have a research method aligned with LATIS to see if the uptake has improved the quality of teaching and learning in schools*
- *Is the NT buying a quality product in SSABSA?*
- *While RTOs do a great sales job, the quality of delivery on the ground leaves a lot to be desired*
- *We need quality assurance in remote communities with site visits to assess them, using mutually agreed criteria.*

6.   While these kinds of comments may lead to a view that the situation in schools was of poor quality with low accountability, this is not the position taken by the review team, nor do we believe that it was usually the position of the provider of the comment. There are many good schools with good teachers. Students told us about them and we met them ourselves. The issue is more that parents and the community did not know whether their children were receiving a quality education; nor did they know who was accountable, if they were not. If people have these kinds of perceptions, then they must be addressed. Systems must be in place with a level of transparency and effective reporting that will allow people to test their beliefs and impressions and come up with an accurate picture of the education system as a whole, or individual components of it. The review team saw as its aim to propose an integrated system of accountability that allows the level of quality to be demonstrated against acceptable benchmarks either from within the Northern Territory as a whole, Australia wide, or internationally.

7.   In any system of education, judgements about quality rest at a series of levels, and there must be mechanisms in place to see that the various interests have a clear process whereby their accountability may be tested. These levels are

- the student (the quality of individual learning and its outcomes)
- the parents (the quality of their support for their children)

- the teacher alone or as a team, including other professionals and paraprofessionals (the quality of pedagogy and services to students)
- the principal and the school leadership (the quality of leadership and management)
- the school as a whole, alone or as part of a precinct (the quality and effectiveness of the school or precinct)
- the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) alone and in conjunction with other government departments (the quality of teachers and other employees selected to work in the system, the quality of the curriculum, the quality of support from all services to schools and teachers and ultimately to students, and resource allocations to achieve quality education)
- the unions, whether they be for teachers or others working in schools (the quality of the conditions under which their members work)
- the NT Government (fulfilling the purposes and requirements of the legislation, allocating resources to education as a whole, responding to the concerns expressed by Territorians)
- the Legislative Assembly (the purposes of education and the legislation empowering educational institutions).

A table expanding on the responsibilities at these levels is included at the end of this chapter.

8.   In any system of accountability there must be a clearly established link between responsibilities, actions and outcomes, with transparent evaluation activities leading to expressions of accountability. And for accountability, the fundamental questions are: For what is is one accountable? To whom? How is it determined? What is the follow-up action? The answers to these need to be clear for a system of accountability to be effective.

9.   It is not for this review to comment on all of the accountability processes that refer to the Government. The Budget session, question time, public accounts committees and other mechanisms are firmly in place for this purpose. In addition, only at the government level is there a direct accountability to the people for performance, although the test at the ballot box is not just in the field of education, but across all areas of its activity. Nonetheless, education, along with health and security and safety, is one of the main issues that influence voting patterns. It is a matter for the review, however, to advise the government on accountability processes at the level of the student, the teacher and other staff, the principal, the school, and the department.

10.   There is, though, one matter of Government accountability on which it is appropriate for this review to comment, and that is on the allocation of education

funds to the various sectors of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) monitors expenditures by the states and territories and calculates how much a given state or territory spends on a range of areas including education, when compared with the standardised amount the CGC's formulas would expect. Figures made available to the review by the NT Treasury indicate that as a five-year average up until 2002, the CGC Standardised Expenditure compared with the actual amount spent on education, as a whole in the Territory was $381 million as opposed to the $382 million spent annually. This is close to line ball, as over the 5 year period average annual standardised expenditure on primary education was $172 million, compared with $170 million annual actual. On the other hand, expenditure on secondary is lower by some $25 million ($122 million expected as against $97 million average annual actual). Consequently, expenditure on the university and VET is higher (annual average $9 million extra to universities and $22 million extra to VET). The discrepancies in the total come from other relatively minor expenditures such as transport for rural children. Over the five-year period an additional $42 million in total went to the universities and an additional $108 million in total to VET over that expected by the CGC. All this has obvious consequences for secondary education.

11.   The reasons for this reduction in the amount of money allocated to secondary education with a compensating addition to that spent on the university and on TAFE are not for the review to speculate about. We can only say that teaching and learning conditions for secondary education on the remote communities are poor, and there is much that can be improved in the secondary system overall. The enhancement of enterprise and vocational learning in all secondary education, and particularly on communities is one area of obvious need. Another is to raise the level of literacy and numeracy to a point where young people have sufficient skills to pursue a rewarding adult life. Another is to improve pedagogy and teaching so that all young people at a secondary level may receive the kind of education suited to their interests, skills and abilities. Any challenges to these allocations must be in the context of the parliamentary process, and all the review can do is to advise that the allocation to secondary education appears to be below what might be expected, and below that made in other states. This should be taken into account when determining the resources required to implement this report.

Accountability at the student level
12.   Young people have a responsibility to themselves to prepare as best they can for a sustainable and productive future. At the very least this should include an effort to engage with the education system. As we have shown in this report, there are many ways in which the current system is one into which some potential students will find it

difficult to make even the first step, but we are confident that with the implementation of our recommendations the system will at least begin to be more aligned with the needs, abilities and desires of the young people of the Territory. Once students have engaged with the secondary system, they then have responsibilities for their own education, and attendant accountabilities. These include

- once enrolled in the school, to maintain high attendance
- to make efforts to attend to and learn from the teaching and learning program, including working with teachers to understand the materials they are learning from, seeking help when needed, and handing in assignments on time, and so on
- to contribute positively to the culture of the school, including showing respect to each other and to teachers and other staff
- to keep their parents and other caregivers informed about progress and the requirements of the school, and to follow those requirements themselves to the best of their ability
- to be prepared to enter into appropriate adolescent-student/adult-teacher-parent relationships so as to foster communication and cooperation about their goals, learning programs and post-school destinations.

13. Students are not only accountable to themselves and to their parents, families or other caregivers for these responsibilities, but also to their teachers, school mentors and to their schools. Thus, this is a set of accountabilities that will need to be addressed at the teacher/staff and school level.

Accountability at the parent and caregiver level

14. Parents and caregivers have a responsibility to their children to help them, as best they can, to prepare as best *they* can for their futures. This includes the parents' and caregivers' role

- to see that their children maintain high attendance at school
- to be interested in and to keep themselves informed about the learning goals and the progress towards them of their children at school
- to cooperate with the school in developing and maintaining a positive learning culture
- to assist the school establish, understand and maintain positive school-community relationships.

15. Parents, families and caregivers are not only accountable to their children and to themselves for these responsibilities, but also to their children's teachers, school mentors and to the schools. Once explained to the parents and understood and

accepted by them, this becomes another set of accountabilities that will need to be addressed at the school or precinct level. We have already said in other chapters that schools and learning precincts should look at ways of involving parents and families in the life of the school at many levels and in new and different ways, and that this will be one of the aspects that will be expected to be articulated in both precinct development plans, and in strategic plans once precincts are established. In the matters which cross precinct boundaries and become Territory wide, issues should be taken up by peak bodies that represent parents, such as the Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) and those that represent non-Government schools. ASSPA committees must also be supported and strengthened.

Accountability at the community level

16.   Every community the review team visited, whether urban, regional or remote, wished to have secondary education if it was not already there, or to make it more effective if it was already being delivered at that place. In Chapter 7, we have gone into some detail about the social compact to be entered into between communities and DEET, and the reciprocal responsibility of DEET and the emerging precinct to involve the community at all levels in the building of a strong and relevant educational provision. These matters will be a major part of any plans and of the consequent evaluation of the well-being of the precinct as it grows and continues. A basic summary of the community's responsibilities is as follows

- to help decide on the kind of educational service delivery needed in that community, and to be positive and supportive about decisions so made

- to help the school or precinct establish and consolidate its role and functions within the community or across communities

- to support individual parents in their particular needs with respect to the education-related activities of their children

- to respect and support the role of teachers and other school personnel within both the school or precinct and the community.

Accountability at the business and enterprise level

17.   Businesses and enterprises are part of the community in which schools operate, and have the possibility of affirming reciprocal responsibilities and benefits from that relationship. We have already argued the case for strengthening the interaction between schools or learning precincts and the livelihoods providers in their orbits. Again, the activities that are undertaken to do this will be the subject of close examination in the strategic planning and evaluation for each precinct or school. From the perspective of the enterprise or business, there are actions that might reasonably be asked of them, such as

- to work with schools and precincts to inform them of their needs

- to support schools and precincts by accepting students for work experience and other related activities and in other ways

- to advise on the 'work readiness' of young people, based on their practical involvement

- to provide extra support to schools and learning precincts to broaden the range of experiences and rewards available to young people.

Accountability of staff, schools and precincts to students and their families

18.   The review wish to emphasise in the context of accountability what may be described as an *agreement of mutual responsibilities* between a school or learning precinct and its students and their families as part of 'duty of care' responsibilities. Most teachers and other staff within schools are already strongly aware of their responsibilities in this regard, and sometimes frustrated at the challenges these involve. Nonetheless, it is a matter of such importance that it needs to be re-stated, and clearly articulated in this report.

19.   The *agreement of mutual responsibilities* should consist of formal responsibilities of both the student and the school, such as the program of learning to be delivered and engaged with, any extra learning support needed and responsibilities about mutual respect, student attendance and work habits. This agreement is monitored through regular conversations between a student and a nominated teacher or other staff member such as a pathways mentor, and perhaps less often but still significantly, with a parent or caregiver. These conversations should not be considered extras, but an integral part of a staff member's professional responsibilities and a student's commitment to learning, with time programmed for them to happen. Relevant staff also require a duty statement for their own responsibilities so that mentoring students and monitoring agreement*s* are a formal part of their workload. We see this kind of mentoring as being so important that it must be part of either the teacher or mentor and the young person's program of activities.

20.   This review has identified two main stages of secondary schooling
- the 'later middle years' encompassing Years 7–9
- the 'senior years' encompassing Years 10–12.
Students should have regular reviews of progress during their whole time at school or associated activities over their period of adolescence, and appropriate supportive action should occur. Here, the review places particular emphasis on Year 7 as a milestone year when a young person's skill levels are reviewed, and their interests and aspirations are recorded. Individual programs can be devised to foster strengths

and overcome weaknesses. Students and their parents or caregivers must know exactly where the students stand and what they are to face in their secondary years. The Year 7 review managed by a mentoring teacher or other person specialising in this area, becomes a critical baseline for their future development and a key component of their Learning Profile. Discussions with parents or caregivers are particularly important at this stage, so that they are fully aware of what might be expected of their child and of them. The Year 7 MAP tests could be useful in this regard, but given the uncertainty of these results at the student level should only be a part of an extensive set of assessments that will guide decisions about each young person's future.

21.   Another critical year for secondary students is Year 10, where again the young person will undergo a review of progress, and an identification of strengths and weaknesses with a pathways mentor who is skilled at assisting them to decide which particular learning pathways would be most suited to their future interests. These decisions will be illuminated by a range of assessment data including the results of the Year 9 MAP tests (again remembering that this information can be unreliable at the student level) so that both the parents or caregivers, and each student are aware of their level of skill and realistic options that are available. Even so, tests are tools to assist decision making, and there is much informal information from all those involved to be brought to bear.

22.   It is critical that any review of student progress is
- valid and consistent
- supportive and promoting of success
- clear and transparent
- fair and inclusive.

While class by class, school by school, precinct by precinct or state by state comparisons may give data of a global kind, and so give some clues as to how effective a teacher or a school or a system may be in relation to others, nothing is that simple, and they give only limited information about what should happen at the individual student or class level. By far the most important role for a regime of assessing student achievement is to advise on individual skill levels and ways where the young person can improve.

23.   It is critical that the young people and their parents or caregivers have a clear idea from their teacher/mentor of what the school or learning precinct can do for them, and what it cannot. Particularly, a young person and their family must know what the individual student has to do for themselves, and the school or precinct must be informed by the family of any special related circumstances that might influence

learning. It is at this stage that the student and the teacher/mentor identify and set out possible pathways for the young person. This is developed into the *agreement of mutual responsibilities* between the school or precinct, which shows what the individual student and their parents or caregivers will each work towards. These details can be changed as more information becomes available, but only with the joint agreement of the student, the family and the school or learning precinct.

24.   The review sees the involvement of parents and caregivers in these decisions as critical to their success. Families can sometimes forget that the education of their children is a 'good' provided by governments from taxes. At secondary level, for example, something like $13 000 a year is spent per secondary student. It is an opportunity not to be squandered by poor attendance or inattention to what is on offer. It is worth noting that this amount is only about 20% of what it costs to keep a young person in a juvenile detention centre , and a student 'saved' by the school is a saving to society and an opportunity for a fulfilling life created. This emphasises the importance of an agreement between the student, the parent and the school or learning precinct so that the spending of this public money is open to scrutiny. Over a five year period at secondary school, the total allocation for each student is about $65 000, an amount that would be subject to a contract in most other fields of endeavour.

25.   The design of a Futures Portfolio (see Chapter 5) recording student achievement both in school, and in extra curricular activities, which includes a specific plan for a student's future pathways and any necessary information about the range of services that can support the student's transition from school, should be endorsed by the NT Board of Studies[27] in conjunction with the schools/precincts and the Department. It is also proposed that the schools in the non-Government sector be required to participate in this scheme. The ongoing support of the pathways mentor in assisting the student to prepare the Futures Portfolio and in monitoring the student's progress through the senior years and one year after completion of schooling is vital to the success of this initiative.

26.   The Government has recently revamped the Board of Studies, which has among its responsibilities, as prescribed in the Education Act to provide advice to the Minister on curriculum policy, particularly in relation to
- curriculum frameworks
- the assessment of student achievement, reporting and certification
- improving student outcomes.

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[27] The issue of the Board of Studies and its being made part of an overall Quality Services Agency is taken up later in this chapter.

The role of the Board of Studies will need to continue, but be expanded to include offering advice to the Minister not only on curriculum issues but also those to do with future pathways and transitions.

27.   Although the legal aspects of compulsory education will be taken up in the next chapter, in the context of accountability to the students it is important to note that most young people reach the end of compulsory schooling (15 years of age) during Year 10 and so this critical year of assessment and advice on the path ahead coincides with an important decision as to whether the school has an ongoing role to play in a young person's life. It is our view that there is little point yet in raising the school leaving age when so many ignore it now, but that this is a matter that should be kept under regular review.

28.   We will be recommending in the next chapter, however, that a young person may only leave school at the *end of the year* in which they turn 15 years of age, and when they do, they must have a planned pathway ahead, outlined in their Futures Portfolio. The information in this Futures Portfolio will not only assist students in making the transition from school to work, further training or higher education but also allow employers and educators to make a realistic appraisal of students' abilities. It will also allow government agencies such as Centrelink to give students accurate advice on their employment prospects and the need for further education or training. If the standards of English literacy, numeracy and technacy are not at a level to enable young people to participate effectively in Australian society, they should undertake a focused program separate from normal schooling to bring their skills to an acceptable standard.

29.   Students who leave school with a Futures Portfolio will be well prepared in their transition from school to work. The review had much advice that sanctions should apply and be enforced if young people do not finish school in an acceptable manner, or that the parents should have sanctions applied if their children do not attend school regularly. While we have some sympathy for this position, we would prefer the approach we have outlined to be tried. Young people should not be able to leave school and drift off without support and follow-up. Schools have a responsibility to work with students to assist them in the transition from school to work, further training, higher education or effective participation in the community. This matter is discussed further in Chapter 11 on enabling change.

30.   Although school responsibilities for individual students come to a close at the end of Year 12, there would be merit in establishing some process whereby the young person is mentored into the next stage of their lives, whether it encompass work,

university or TAFE, a gap year, or a need to upgrade certain skills if their chosen future requires it. Final assessments of the student at the end of Year 12 and/or at some earlier point of leaving school will provide important indicators of whether the path chosen for the senior years will lead to the planned employment or other socially acceptable next step beyond school. The review believes this is an issue that should be taken up on a precinct-by-precinct basis as to how such an outcome might be best accomplished. We draw attention to the issue in the hope that the schools and precincts, in conjunction with other agencies including employers, might see this as a worthwhile course of action to pursue. The key issue is for the young person to receive the advice to assist in the transition to the next stage of their lives. This is a very complex transition, with an ever-broadening set of demands and opportunities that neither the young people nor their parents, are always well equipped to negotiate.

Accountability at the teaching level

31.   Accountability at the teaching level is critical if a quality system of secondary schooling is to be achieved, whether the teaching is done by qualified teachers acting alone, or is assisted by other professionals or para-professionals. This accountability must rest finally with a qualified teacher, no matter who is part of the teaching team. The NT Government has been working to establish a Teacher Registration Board with the following proposed functions

- maintaining a register of teachers
- determining the minimum qualifications and other entry requirements for the profession
- working with tertiary institutions on standards and content of teacher education programs
- enhancing the status of teachers and promoting the teaching profession
- setting professional practice standards
- establishing procedures for confirming the professional competence of teachers, especially or initially during a probationary period of employment
- setting codes of ethics and codes of conduct
- disciplinary action in relation to misconduct or incompetence to teach
- promoting ongoing development of professional skills and knowledge
- determining whether an individual is suitable to be a teacher.

Although an ultimate responsibility to withdraw professional registration cannot be avoided, we would stress that support for teachers at risk needs to involve well-documented and understood processes of mentoring and special support.

32. All these functions are directed at helping to achieve a quality workforce, and the review team fully supports this approach. While the exercise of these functions may deliver more quality teachers for the Territory as a whole, apart from a case where disciplinary action is contemplated, they do not focus on the pedagogical requirements of a teacher in a particular school. While we agree this is a separate issue from those leading to the establishment of a Teacher Registration Board, currently they are handled at the school level, if they are handled at all; the quality of the ongoing pedagogy is at the heart of what makes a good school. These issues have been taken up strongly throughout this report.

33. The review was impressed with the range of people other than teachers we found working in Territory schools. This can only increase as the work in schools expands and other professionals and para-professionals should be encouraged to assist in the work of schools and learning precincts. There are counsellors, psychologists, nurses, police officers, reading assistants, ICT experts, technical instructors, tutors, AIEWs, ISAs and many more, all doing good work. Yet we saw that training and induction processes were often limited, that teachers did not always know how best to use the support, and that continued funding for some positions was uncertain. The review team sees this as an important area to be addressed, and we have done so in other chapters, including where we recommended in Chapter 9 an investigation into the roles, career paths and training needs of para-professional and support staff. If this is followed through, then it will be important to enable the 'professionalisation' of these positions through similar processes as those being mooted for teachers, and this should include a registration process.

Accountability of principals and heads of precincts

34. One of the major planks of this review is the need for strong and able leaders to be given the responsibility to run their schools and precincts, working together as a team for the schools' success. Principals and heads of precinct have two major and separate functions—they are the most senior educational leaders in the school and precinct, as well as the most senior managers. The principals in a learning precinct will report to the head of precinct, who in turn will be responsible to a governance structure or group, the constitution of which is to be determined in the process of precinct development outlined in Chapter 7. The main responsibility of all three groups working together is to see that school and precinct resources are applied to their best effect, that the school or precinct is meeting the requirements of its strategic plan, and particularly, to monitor the performance of teachers and other staff, by supporting and sustaining good work, and providing a development program to help raise the skills of all staff to help the young people in their care to achieve their best.

35.   The best managers are those who can achieve effectiveness without fuss, who delegate their responsibilities clearly, and monitor how well these are being fulfilled. They know how to achieve the best from their staff, and as leaders, they set an example that others can easily follow. Good leaders have dedicated followers, who do so not blindly, but in a context that sometimes the most important news of the moment that can be brought to the leader is 'bad news' because it is through the negative that things can be improved. Effective leaders encourage openness and transparency, and opportunities to talk through either what the important issues are. They can manage change by explaining its advantages, and take the lead themselves by being open and able to change.

36.   On the other hand, as educational leaders, the principal and head of precinct know the curriculum and its appropriate pedagogy, can advise on where to go for help, are able to direct where effort for improvement should be placed, concentrate on the positives and build on them, while solving the negatives in a way that builds confidence rather than reduces it. The leaders should set an example to the staff in their dealings that parallels the kind of teachers and other staff the school requires in working with young people. 'Do as I do' is always much more powerful than 'do as I say'.

37.   In our view, the accountability of the principal and head of precinct is inextricably intertwined with determining the effectiveness of their school and precinct. When these are held to be not functioning in an acceptable manner (see our later references to a Quality Services Agency) the leader should be made aware of this assessment, and be given a short time to initiate improvements. In the end, if improvements are not achieved, separation from the position must be considered. The learning needs of the students are too important to allow an ineffective leader to continue. Nonetheless, this cannot be done capriciously; it must only occur where the school or precinct is not meeting the planned benchmarks for its success and this lack is attributable to the leadership. Each place is different and principals and heads of precinct must be aware that they will be judged against what is happening in their school or learning precinct, not against some idealised standard that might be applied to all.

38.   Good leaders keep abreast of their profession, maintain links with other schools, communities, enterprise and other education providers, and particularly with universities, and not just their education faculties. Leadership is both within the school or precinct, and also outside. The leader represents their organisation to the outside world, and in the case of a head of precinct, to all the agencies in the precinct dealing with young people.

39.   There are many examples of publicly funded organisations that are required to undergo formal processes to achieve accreditation if they are to continue to receive funding. Child care centres, hospitals, aged care homes all spring to mind as examples of institutions across Australia requiring accreditation against agreed standards if they are to continue to function. None of these systems was introduced just for the sake of it—they were introduced because there was concern about the need to make them publicly accountable for the quality of the very important services they provide to the public. In addition, across the country there are systems for registering non-Government schools, if they are to continue to receive government money. A major purpose of school/precinct accreditation should be to see whether the school or precinct has effective ongoing internal processes for managing its performance against stated goals, and is continuing to improve its capabilities. The outcomes of accreditation should not result in a once in five years spurt to prove accountability, but make certain that the school or precinct has an ongoing commitment and a plan which is being implemented in a manner that focuses on making the school or learning precinct as good as it can be.

40.   In terms of the Territory's Education Act, for a child of compulsory age – that is between 6 and 15 years – their parent

shall enrol the child in (i) a government school; or (ii) a non-government school which is a registered educational institution within the meaning of Part VII (of the Act).

Government schools are not registered—the Minister determines their existence. Non-Government schools go through a process of registration following an application. In the application, among other things, the school has to provide information about

- method of management of its affairs
- qualifications of those employed
- the curriculum to be taught
- descriptions of buildings and facilities
- its financial position.

The school can only be registered if it satisfies the CE of DEET that it will operate within the applicable prescribed requirements. Authorised persons may visit a non-Government school at least once per year to determine whether the institution is operating in accordance with the prescribed requirements. After such a visit the CE of DEET and the principal of the school receive a report of the findings. While these are the bare bones of what a sound system of accreditation of schools should require, it does put some discipline on a school to provide an appropriate service. Although this

is described as relating to schools, a similar situation should apply to learning precincts.

41.   While it was not the task of the review team to assess schools, we gained a view of considerable variability in the quality of the schools we visited. Some gave the impression of being excellent, others that they were barely coping with the demands. In our view the good schools need to be acknowledged publicly, and those not performing so well should be assisted to improve, not to establish 'league tables', but to reassure the wider public of their effectiveness. One of the reasons for proposing learning precincts as an organisational unit was to allow for a more effective allocation of leadership and teaching skills to meet the needs of the communities the precinct serves.

42.   The review team is firmly committed to the introduction of a system of accreditation, which might be more appropriately termed a system of positive performance management, of all schools, both Government and non-Government, particularly through the formation of learning precincts. As in the discussion of staff performance management in Chapter 9, school and precinct assessment or performance management should be used as a valuable and strategic management tool, which recognises, empowers and acknowledges those schools and precincts that are performing well, and which helps others who are not doing so well to become the kind of organisation that can be effective in the renewed system we are proposing. It is important that this be managed in a positive and constructive way so that it is a learning and growing process for all concerned, just as it should be at the individual staff level.

43.   As outlined in the chapters on precinct establishment and development, various plans, contracts and other documents establishing agreements and responsibilities are required at each major step along the way, and once fully operational, strategic plans will be a tool for ongoing internal performance management. To operate in parallel with this, there should be an ongoing process of quality auditing by an outside agency, to help DEET provide a framework in which plans can be developed, to assist in the process of approving the plans when they are first proposed, and then to help in assessing performance to goals on an ongoing basis. We have suggested in Chapter 7 that this latter should occur every three years, but there should also be the possibility of smaller, more focused audits which might be initiated by parents, or by the Minister if they are unsure of the quality of the teaching and learning or other service in the school or precinct. Broad guidelines will need to be established, stating the criteria against which schools or learning precinct will be accredited or quality audited, but more importantly, the school or precinct should be assessed against their

strategic plans. As part of the process, self-assessment of the school/precinct will be extremely important.

Making educational quality a priority

44.   The separation of the responsibilities of the major employer, in this case DEET, from its responsibility to the government to assure quality, and to make government and non-government employers accountable for the quality of the educational service they are providing, is essential. Those responsible for running schools and learning precincts cannot also be the final arbiters of the quality of what is occurring within them. In the same way, DEET head office cannot realistically be its own performance assessor.

45.   That issues related to both curriculum and to the quality of teachers must to an extent lie outside the purview of employers and be independently judged is now accepted by the NT Government with its Board of Studies and proposed Teacher Registration Board. This basic policy position of objective external assessment now needs to be extended to the accreditation or performance management of all schools and learning precincts.

46.   The accountability gap in the Northern Territory is in the accreditation of schools, and this is only partial, because of the system of registration of non-Government schools. The review team proposes to fill this gap with a Territory-wide system for accrediting or managing the performance of schools and learning precincts. More importantly though, we consider that the whole system of accountability, including the accountability of DEET itself, is best seen and organised as an integrated whole, with one body– a Quality Services Agency – responsible to the Minister for assessing the quality of DEET as a system, learning precincts, schools, teachers, curriculum, and student outcomes. It should incorporate the current work of the Board of Studies and the Teacher Registration Board, take over from the Department responsibility for the registration of non-Government schools but changing it to a process of accreditation, and adding a responsibility for the accreditation of Government schools. The Agency would be an independent body reporting to the Minister, with its own public service secretariat. While in strict adherence to our terms of reference, such recommendations would only apply to secondary schools, we believe the benefits are such that they should apply to the whole system of schools, especially if, as we recommend, the establishment of learning precincts brings all levels of schooling together under one planning and delivery umbrella.

47.   A good school requires strong leadership, effective teachers skilled in pedagogy, teaching a curriculum suited to the wide range of needs of adolescents so that each young person achieves a pathway to a fulfilling life. We must stress the 'ecology' of learning, the – all togetherness of everything' – the learning from peers, families, schools and the agencies in the wider society and how they fit (or not) together. How does the school or precinct manage all this so that the young person sees likely futures clearly?

48.   The review team believes this is best assessed by a system of school accreditation and precinct performance management, against Territory benchmarks and the plans the school or precinct has for itself. This will include reviewing overall student and staff performance, making some assessment of how well the school or precinct is achieving its goals, and providing a report on the school or precinct that is publicly available. If a school or precinct has exemplary programs, for example in music, sport, ICT, languages, mathematics and science, keyboarding, providing field experience for teachers in training, offering professional development to teachers outside its boundaries, has an exceptional program for working with the wider community, is establishing school enterprises, special credit and acknowledgement could be given so that this expertise could be shared more widely.

49.   The submissions, and our consultations revealed, there was an overwhelming view that the NT secondary system should make quality a major priority and that systems should be put in place, building on those already established, to help schools in the Territory to be as good as they can be and certainly as good as equivalent schools anywhere in Australia, and up with the best anywhere. This is a high expectation, and will only be delivered over time, but the establishment of a Quality Services Agency will provide an essential beginning to the process. There was also a view expressed in consultations that there needed to be a mechanism for parents, caregivers and students to air grievances that they have been unable to resolve at the school or system level. The quality Services Agency could provide an avenue for addressing these.

50.   There would be merit in DEET examining the processes used by health departments around Australia to come to grips with accountability in the health area and assessing whether such an approach based – on establishing and using clear benchmarks and baseline data – would be relevant in the NT for checking whether precincts are meeting their obligations. The push to benchmarking has raised the quality of the health system in Australia. The same can be said of improvements in the aged care industry, where benchmarks are used to assess whether aged care homes meet satisfactory standards. The same might apply in education.

51. In relation to resourcing, Deeble makes some interesting observations on resource allocation in public health and expenditures on health services for Indigenous people reminding us that resource allocation is an *economic process, not just a planning one* (Deeble 2001, 1999), a position that seems to have been forgotten in education. There is also a need to look at some of the economic characteristics of education services, comparing those on communities with those in urban and regional areas. We also need to be aware of the economic costs of students not completing their education. A recent report done for the Business Council of Australia (2003, p.7) by the Allen Consulting Group and the Centre of Policy Studies at Monash University found that any program that would result in an increase from 80% to 90% in the proportion of young people who achieve Year 12 would *require an investment in the short term* but in the longer run, *the benefits of the program outweigh the costs.* The review believes it would be worthwhile to do an analysis of the economic costs and benefits of improving Indigenous student retention.

52. While there would be those who say that benchmarking education is very different from benchmarking health, and determining cost effectiveness measures very different as well, and this may be so, it does not mean education should ignore such processes. The review team believes that more attention could be paid in the education sector to establishing baseline data to demonstrate improvements in outcomes for the money spent. We consider that benchmarking is fundamental to being able to demonstrate that quality provision is being achieved and is an issue that should be taken up by the proposed Quality Services Agency.

53. We think, too, that framework agreements similar to those already negotiated in Indigenous health with equal partnerships between members of the community on the one hand and the health department and ATSIC on the other may provide a model for the way forward in education. We suggest that DEET play a lead role in advising governments as to how the model may be adapted for education. This may well require an analysis to establish the relative proportions of education resources that go to Indigenous people as compared with the rest of the community, as has been done in health.

54. It also appears that the Northern Territory does not receive its share of Commonwealth funds for non-Government secondary schooling. While the review team is unsure whether this fact is allowed for in Commonwealth Grants allocations, it is important that the matter be clarified in discussions with the Commonwealth, and if insufficient adjustment is now made, then this could be a new source of funds for

Indigenous education. Compared with other jurisdictions in Australia, the Northern Territory has the lowest level of enrolment of secondary students in non-Government schools. The Commonwealth is the major source of government funds for those non-Government schools with a high proportion of students from low socio-economic groups. The Territory population has the nation's lowest socio-economic status, with a high proportion of those in the lowest socio-economic groups being Indigenous people.
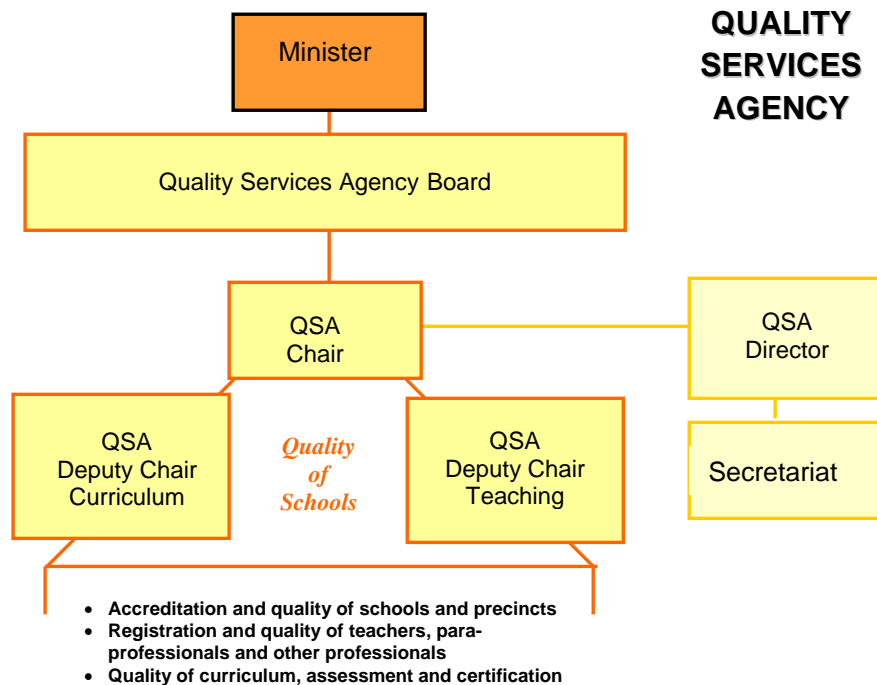
55.   There are 11 730 young people of secondary school age in the Territory but only 3 366 (28.7%) of these are enrolled in non-Government schools, compared with a national average of 36% (see Chapter 2). Thus enrolments in non-Government schools in the Territory are 7.3% below the national average. (The other territory, the ACT, has 41.3% of its students in non-Government secondary schools which is 12.6% above the national average).

56.   The higher the proportion of the school population in non-Government schools, then the higher is the proportion of students funded by the Commonwealth in that state or territory. The ACT comes off best and the NT worst. This difference is exacerbated by the fact that the NT has a much higher proportion of secondary students who are Indigenous, compared with other states: 38% as against 2.7%. Without going through the statistics and argument in this report, our rough calculations suggest that the NT is missing out on at least $8 million of Commonwealth monies to the Territory by having such a low proportion of students in non-Government schools, and such a high proportion of Indigenous who would be in non-Government schools if it was as attractive to operate them for Indigenous people as it is in other states to operate them for the non-Indigenous members of the community.

57.   This argument has not been given sufficient analysis by the review team, so we propose that the NT Government examine it closely and if valid, have discussions with the Commonwealth with a view to increasing their commitment of funds to secondary education to bring them in line with the amounts paid in the other states and territories. The high proportion of Indigenous students makes the Northern Territory a special case, with the solution not necessarily being to open more non-Government schools, but to make Government schools somehow eligible for this Commonwealth funding.

The functions and operation of the Quality Services Agency

58.   This Agency, would become the cornerstone of quality and accountability in all its aspects, advising the NT Government on the quality of student outcomes, teachers and schools. It could also advise on the operation of the system as a whole, and be a point of resolution of grievances not dealt with effectively at the school or precinct level. This would also deflect from the Minister issues that are better dealt with outside a political or government framework. It is sometimes the case that complaints and grievances give a clue to where components of the system may be falling down, and the QSA would then be in a position not only to mediate a situation that had not been dealt with satisfactorily at the local level, but also to assist in the building of systems to prevent recurrence.

QUALITY SERVICES AGENCY

Minister

Quality Services Agency Board

QSA Chair

QSA Director

QSA Deputy Chair Curriculum

Quality of Schools

QSA Deputy Chair Teaching

Secretariat

- **Accreditation and quality of schools and precincts**
- **Registration and quality of teachers, para-professionals and other professionals**
- **Quality of curriculum, assessment and certification**

59.   Staff of the Agency should be public servants, but with the Agency having the power to co-opt people from outside for specific working parties and tasks. A Director of the Agency, who is responsible to the Board, should head the Agency staff. A Board or Council will govern the Agency. There is a general power under the Education Act to set up Advisory Councils, which may be established to

deal with any matter affecting the administration of this Act, education in general or a specified field of education… and it may be constituted consisting of… *such members as the Minister thinks fit to appoint.*

We suggest an independent full or part-time Chair, a full time person with major responsibility for curriculum and assessment, and a full time person with major responsibility for matters relating to the quality of teachers, to be appointed by the Administrator. The Minister could appoint other members of the Council of the

Agency, to a total of no more than 12, but preferably ten, including the three already accounted for. There could be a minimum of three from the delivery side – teachers, principals/heads of precinct and students – and three from groups interested in the products of the system, – parents, employers, and the tertiary education system. The team of four – the Chairman, the Director and the two specialists – could jointly manage matters relating to accreditation of schools and to resolve grievances.

60.   Essentially, the Agency is to advise the Minister on all aspects of quality that relate to education in the Northern Territory. It will have responsibility equally for all aspects of school education provision and support, including Government and non-Government schools, learning precincts and DEET office based services. In summary, it will be responsible for advising on and enhancing

- the curriculum and student outcomes
- the quality and responsibilities of teachers and teaching
- the quality and responsibilities of other staff who work in schools and learning precincts
- the accreditation and performance management of schools and learning precincts
- determining on such grievances as may arise that cannot be dealt with effectively at the school or precinct level
- the effectiveness of the education systems.

61.   Combining all the functions in one agency will reduce significantly administration costs. It will also allow synergies to develop between the curriculum and its assessment, the teaching of the curriculum, and the overall quality of the schools, learning precincts, and school systems. On the other hand, there is not a large enough pool of qualified people in the Territory to undertake all the curriculum tasks nor the school accreditation tasks, and from time to time this expertise will need to be brought in from out side. Even so, the task of school/precinct accreditation should, wherever possible, be a mutual assessment by peers from within the Territory, and staff could be seconded into the agency to help with particular projects or audits.

62.   The review proposes that the Government agree to establish the Agency as a matter of priority, with a small interim Board and to appoint a Director to put in place the support system. The review team is of the view that this interim Board should advise the Minister by clarifying the Agency's functions, proposing an administration system, advising on an ongoing budget, determining functions for each of the areas of responsibility of the Agency, and obtaining nominations for Board members. This process should take no longer than twelve months from the date of Government approval of this report.

SSABSA

63.   The review team spent some time with SSABSA, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia, examining the relationship between that body and the Territory education system. This is a good example of the Territory buying in a service that would be much more expensive, and possibly of lower quality if it were to be provided by the NT alone at this time. There was clearly a strong desire on the part of the officers of SSABSA to make the system work to meet the needs of the NT, which are in some respects different from those in South Australia. The NT has its own curriculum framework up to Year 10, and utilises the SA system for Years 11 and 12 to offer the NT Certificate of Education and obtain a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) for admission into the country's universities. The review team sees no reason why this arrangement should not continue.

64.   At the very least, we would advise that no decision be made until SSABSA has had an opportunity to respond to this review to see how they can assist the Territory take the educational steps set down. This does not mean that we are entirely convinced that SSABSA is the only option, and that the Territory has had its different requirements sufficiently acknowledged, but at this stage for the sake of continuity, and other directions that may arise as a result of this review, we do not recommend any changes until the Quality Services Agency has had an opportunity to examine the issues and has had an opportunity to come to terms with the needs of the senior years.

Accountability of DEET and the QSA

65.   As a Government department, DEET is responsible to the Minister for fulfilling the requirements of the Education Act, and it is both the prime and final source of advice to the Minister. Yet the Minister is not in a position to test for himself how well a department is fulfilling its functions. Giving sound and acceptable advice to the Minister and having responses to Ministerial questions answered promptly and usefully may be the evidence on which a Minister judges their department. But this top up service to the Minister is only half the story—how well does the Department provide advice and support to those out in the field? How effective is its advice to a non-Government school on registration? How well are the government's policies promulgated out in the field? How efficiently are services delivered? What educational leadership does it provide? How well does it work with other government agencies? How effective is it in selecting and inducting its staff? How well does the staffing profile match the workload? How effective is the application of the budget to the functions of the department?

66.   These are all important questions that a CE will review from time to time. While for the most part this may be sufficient, the review team proposes that there be two additional ways in which the effectiveness of DEET may be tested. The first is for the Minister to invite the Quality Services Agency to review individual aspects of the department's activities. This would occur when Ministers believe they have information that would make such a course of action necessary. The second is to commission an external review, say every five years, managed administratively by the Agency, but undertaken by a team of external experts skilled in these kinds of reviews. This second course of action should be applied from time to time to the Agency itself, with DEET managing the administration of the review, but bringing in external experts to make the assessment. This also should occur about every five years.

67.   The principal consultant met regularly with the DEET Executive to discuss issues relating to the review. These were useful, in that the Executive provided a relatively large forum of senior people with whom ideas could be tested, and they enabled members to be made aware that changes are round the corner. In Chapter 11 we reviewed the current structure of DEET and advised on some possible changes that may be needed to put our proposals into effect. In this context, the review is of the view that structure follows function, and purposes of any groups that meet should be clear so that efficient outcomes flow from them. The structure of DEET has two main responsibilities in relation to this review:—one is to serve the Minister and the business of Government, and the other is to serve teaching and learning. Anything else is secondary, and the accountability of DEET must be judged against how effectively the structure serves these two functions.

68.   It is not absolutely clear what the function of the department's executive is in relation to the two prime functions. The DEET Corporate Governance Handbook, an impressive document on most counts, does not describe the functions or purpose of the Executive at all. The size of the Executive seemed large, often with somewhere between 15 and 20 in the room. This would not allow much time for individual participation, and the cost effectiveness of the operation should perhaps be examined, particularly when meetings in various parts of the Territory are held. Just what is the function of the Executive? How may these functions be best achieved? How often should it meet? Who gains most from the meetings? How are services to the Minister, or teaching and learning, enhanced because of them? We make these comments not to be critical, but to remind members of the department that no part of the system should be excluded from close scrutiny as to quality and accountability.

Other Accountabilities

69.   We have tried to be inclusive of all stakeholders and their accountabilities in this section of the report, but there are some that may wish to be considered separately. For example, we have not explicitly discussed the accountability of a union to its members, and to the systems its members serve. These are both important matters, but are perhaps best taken up by the unions themselves. At present, we have indicated in earlier chapters that all stakeholders, including unions, should be involved in the planning for and development of learning precincts, and that those plans and performance to them will be monitored by the QSA. Every stakeholder group has its own accountabilities to the education system and to itself. We did not take these further, believing them to be matters for the stakeholders themselves to address.

Education Advisory Council

70.   The review team is aware of the Education Advisory Council. Its functions are essentially to consider matters relating to the provision of educational services in the Territory, make recommendations to the Minister on their provision, and report to the Minister from time to time. We see this as essentially a policy advisory body that does not cut across or duplicate the role and functions of the Quality Services Agency.

71.   The issues of quality, responsibility and accountability are at the core of improving the system, yet they are not separate from teaching and learning, the core business of schools and precincts. They illuminate what should occur to make these the best they can be. There is no merit in assessment or performance management for their own sake; they are an ongoing part of school and precinct management, an ongoing part of teaching and learning no matter the setting, and an ongoing part of informing parents and caregivers as well as the young people themselves about how well they are performing, and what their realistic expectations are for the future. Set out below is a table identifying responsibilities and accountabilities at various levels that are intended to summarise the perspectives outlined above.

Table of Accountabilities and Responsibilities

Organisations and individuals within the NT secondary education field	Responsibilities	Accountability for the effective discharge of those responsibilities
The Government of the NT	• To provide appropriate educational services to the people of the NT through broad policy directions, related funding allocations and the establishment of appropriate organisational structures to implement relevant policies	• To the people of the NT, especially the young people in this case, through parliamentary processes and during periodic elections • To the people of the NT for the appropriate expenditure of funds provided by the Commonwealth through the Commonwealth Grants Commission
DEET	• To establish and maintain schools and learning precincts, and related facilities in such places that students can have reasonable access to them • To provide teachers and ancillary staff for these schools/learning precincts • To provide curriculum direction and related material • To allocate funds from those provided by Government • To transform school practice in the NT through effective educational policies • To provide for the induction and professional development and training of school leaders, teachers and other staff	• To the young people of the NT • To the Minister or relevant other parties as appointed by the Government of the NT • To the teaching force for the overall development of a culture of learning and care in the schools of the NT • To the community for the way government policies are implemented through its activities and provisions
Schools and Precincts Note: A complementary set of requirements could be made for the role and activities of the leaders as principals or heads of precinct	• To provide teaching and learning activities relevant to the ages, stages of development and needs of their students • To establish and maintain a positive learning culture within the school and precinct • To provide appropriate supervision and care for these students in school-related situations • To provide developmental supervision for the teachers and other staff members of the school and precinct • To establish and maintain productive relationships with parents and the general community	• To their students • To DEET, through the local governance structure determined during development • To parents and the community • To their own community of teachers and learners within the school/precinct • To enterprises, university and vocational education institutions and other destinations of young people leaving school
Teaching and other staff	• To establish and maintain productive professional and personal relationships with young people, as appropriate to their age and development • To provide teaching and learning in a relevant curriculum area, such that students show positive learning growth • To contribute positively to the overall responsibilities and activities of the school and precinct, and to the development and maintenance of its learning culture • To establish and maintain appropriate relationships and levels of communication with the parents of the students in their care, the general community, university and possible future employers of young people • To continue their own personal and professional development and training, both individually and in cooperation with others so as to maintain appropriate knowledge and skill levels and to increase professional capacity and capability	• To their students • To parents and to the community of which they are part • To the school and precinct and to the other professionals within it • To their employers • To themselves as reflective professionals

Organisations and individuals within the NT secondary education field	Responsibilities	Accountability for the effective discharge of those responsibilities
Students	• Once enrolled in the school, to maintain high attendance • To make efforts to attend to and learn from the teaching and learning program • To contribute positively to the culture of the school • To keep their parents and other caregivers informed about progress and the requirements of the school • To be prepared to enter into appropriate adolescent-student/adult-teacher-parent relationships so as to foster communication and cooperation about their goals, learning programs and post-school destinations	• To themselves during their development as reflective skilled individuals • To other students, as part of maintaining the school as a desirable place to be • To their teachers, in response to their engagement in teaching/learning activities • To their parents and if relevant, to their workplaces
Parents, families and caregivers	• To see that their children attend school • To be interested in and to keep themselves informed about the learning goals and the progress towards them of their children at school • To cooperate with the school in developing and maintaining a positive learning culture • To assist the school establish, understand and maintain positive school-community relationships	• To their children by providing positive support for their attendance and progress in school • To the school, by requiring the attendance of their children, and for supporting the goals and activities of the school • To any relevant social agencies which set requirements for attendance • To any association of parents working for the improvement of schools
Related community groups	• To be positive about the need for the school in the community • As need be, to help the school establish and consolidate its role and functions within the community • To support individual parents in their particular needs with respect to the school-related activities of their children • To respect and support the role of teachers and other school personnel within both the school and the community	• To the young people in the community as leaders and mentors of their future • To themselves as community members • To the school or learning precinct as partners in the growth and development of the young people
Employers and related enterprise	• To work with schools to inform them of their needs • To support schools by accepting students for work experience and other related activities and in other ways • To advise on the 'work readiness' of young people • To provide extra support to schools to broaden the range of experiences and rewards available to young people	• To the students, school and precinct as partners in building capacity and capability • To themselves as generators of growth and development • To their association of employers by contributing to the expression of its aims

Notes:

1. Other bodies have responsibilities to schools, students and teachers. These include universities and other tertiary institutions, unions and a whole range of stakeholders. Their responsibilities should be taken up within themselves, and worked through with schools, learning precincts or the system as a whole.

2. Accountabilities can change, and these changes when agreed should be acknowledged. Activities related to fulfilling responsibilities at each of the levels should be identified, and procedures for evaluating the utility and effectiveness of the activities should be an ongoing review activity.

Interfaces between learning precincts and agencies

72.   This report proposes new work units requiring the re-positioning of existing functions in the structure, and the taking up of new responsibilities by the various

work units , DEET, the Learning Precincts, and the Quality Services Agency. Fundamental responsibility for delivering education should eventually rest with the learning precincts. They are the providers of education and will be accountable to their own management boards for implementation of the learning precinct's strategic plan, and to DEET who will provide educational policies and frameworks, support for teaching and learning, recruit staff on behalf of the precincts and determine resource allocation. The Quality Services Agency will be responsible for advice on curriculum in a way similar to the current Board of Studies, for teacher quality through processes similar to those of the recently approved Teacher Registration Board – both we propose to be incorporated within the QSA –and for the quality of schools through accreditation.

73.   Old ways of doing things, old networks and previous processes will become redundant and new interfaces and ways of working will have to be put in place. These new ways and particularly any formalisation of them should be part of the implementation team's responsibilities. The establishing of interfaces is both a formal process and an informal one, and the essential feature of achieving success in this task comes through leadership at the various levels, but particularly at the top to 'make things work'. The challenge is to work together to make the new system function effectively.

74.   There will be a potentially lengthy period of transition, from existing arrangements, to a situation where a precinct will be responsible to its own management board. In the first instance, an interim head of precinct will be appointed by DEET to establish the precinct, bringing together the schools within its area of responsibility and reviewing overall resources available. The interim HoP will report to an officer in DEET, in all likelihood either one of the current General Managers Schools or the Deputy CE responsible for schools, until such time as a management board of some kind has been established at the precinct level. From that point, it is envisaged the HoP would be functionally responsible to DEET for the general operation of its programs in terms of the policies, frameworks and resources provided, and to the precinct board for implementing the precinct's strategic plan.

75.   Learning precincts will eventually have considerable autonomy, so the heads of these will have to be proactive in establishing networks with DEET. In return, DEET will require regular meetings with precinct heads to determine ways of working. The heads of DEET and the QSA will need to be in close and regular contact particularly in the set up stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality and Accountability

It is recommended that

42. the NT Government review its allocation of funding across the sectors of education and particularly that to secondary education so that the deficiencies identifies in this report may more adequately be addressed.

43. NT DEET require schools to develop agreements of mutual responsibilities in education between schools, secondary students, and their parents/caregivers for students in Years 7 and 10 which will include
     - an outline of the learning opportunities and support to be provided by the school
     - expectations of the student in regards to attendance, work habits and behaviour
     - the level of support required of parents for their child's education.

44. the NT Government establish a separate statutory Quality Services Agency to be responsible to the Minister for advising the Government on all aspects of quality in education, having jurisdiction over both Government and non-Government schools. This Agency will
     - incorporate the role and responsibilities of the Board of Studies and advise on the quality of the curriculum taught in schools and the processes of student assessment and certification
     - incorporate the role and responsibilities of the proposed Teacher Registration Board to advise on those appropriate to be registered as teachers and the quality of their work
     - institute a system of registering para-professional and other professional staff, including the requirements for training and induction that must be met before they can work in schools and learning precincts
     - establish and maintain a system for the accreditation of all schools and learning precincts, building on the processes already in place for registering non-Government schools, and for their performance management against their individual strategic plans, so that the Government and the wider community may be advised on the quality of education on offer at educational institutions in the Territory
     - advise the NT Government on the quality of teacher education courses on offer in the Territory and elsewhere and accredit those courses producing teachers with the appropriate level of knowledge and skills to be teachers in the Territory, and to accredit courses for graduate teachers designed to improve

their level of professional skill, taking into account the new roles of secondary teachers proposed in Chapter 9

- provide a system of grievance resolution for students, parents, and the wider community where they believe there are issues relating to students, teachers, the curriculum, and schools or learning precincts, that have not been addressed after attempts to resolve them at the local level
- review the activities of the department responsible for education in the Territory and advise the Minister on the quality of its services.
- in itself, be subject to review at regular intervals of not more than five years by an external assessment team, reporting to the Minister, and the report to be tabled in Parliament to receive scrutiny through the normal parliamentary processes.

CHAPTER 13
ENABLING CHANGE

> Good legislation provides the framework for effective teaching and learning.
>
> The essential quality of the professional relationships between good teachers and young people cannot be mandated.

1.   This chapter is concerned with the legislative framework, and other actions at a state and Commonwealth government level, that will enable the recommendations of this review to be implemented. We have examined the Northern Territory's Education Act and propose here some changes to it, and to matters that the NT Government might otherwise require of schools, precincts and DEET. This is particularly in regard to the matters of compulsory attendance, to the establishment of Learning Precincts, to adopting an integrated services approach with other agencies, and to the employment of education staff.

The Education Act

2.   The review team in examining the Education Act was struck by the fact that the legislation is now 25 years old, dating back to 1979, coming soon after self-government. Since then it has been amended more than 30 times. Like most road maps from this period, its age is beginning to show. The world is now a very different place. Education has a much broader mandate than it did then. It does not stand alone when issues are dealt with. There is a range of Commonwealth and Territory agencies all dealing with young people. Other states – Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia – either have or are in the process of developing new legislation more suited to the times. Without legislation that is workable and respected, the education system in the Territory is unlikely to reach its potential. The review emphasises a need for change in secondary education and this should be 'led' by forward looking and appropriate legislation.

3.   The team has noted, too, the Chief Minister's decision to put the matter of statehood for the Territory back on the agenda. It is our view that one of the symbols of attaining statehood would be to have a new Education Act as a basis for developing the new State and its people. While it may not be part of our terms of reference to advise that a new Education Act be promulgated, we believe that it would be an important symbol for a new state for a new Act to be developed. It would probably take at least a year of discussion if the people of the Territory were to be given the opportunity to have their say about the directions they see for education. This has been the process put in train in Western Australia and South Australia.

4.   If the recommendations of this review are adopted there will be a need for the current Education Act to be amended. This relates to the following matters

- the establishment of a Quality Services Agency as described in Chapter 12, although its establishment could probably come under the general power to establish advisory councils
- a revision of the section relating to compulsory schooling which is now highly dated, especially when the last prosecution occurred in the mid 1980s, and was unsuccessful. This issue will be dealt with later in this chapter
- the establishment of Learning Precincts in urban, regional, and remote areas. If this is proceeded with there will be much consequent redundant legislation in the Act.

There is a case to have separate legislation for the Quality Services Agency. It should be a statutory authority, reporting directly to the Minister, to be responsible for quality of curriculum, teachers and schools for the whole of the Territory, and not just government schools. Its establishment is a matter for Government to act on now, not one for discussion, should there be wider consultation about a new Act.

5.   The revised Education Act or any new legislation will provide the mandate within which the education system operates. It defines what education is for, the expectations the Parliament has on behalf of the people for it, and the broad requirements for all those who work in the field. The legislation will describe who must attend school, and what happens if they do not. It will provide a framework for the curriculum, and determine who can or cannot teach. It will make provision for quality and ways quality can be tested so that parents and caregivers may be reassured that their children are receiving a worthwhile education. It will give the parameters for both Government and non-Government schools, so that families can make a choice in the knowledge that the school they decide upon meets certain quality criteria. Schools and their staff operate within these parameters, but in the end it is what happens between teachers, other staff and young people, and the culture of the school that determine the success of learning. There can be no law about this, but there can be processes, which allow staff to discover how learning can be made most effective, not just in terms of single outcomes like the Tertiary Entrance Rank score, but in terms of developing for the nation a group of well-informed, capable, and engaged young people.

Compulsory Education

6.   There are more than four pages in the Act devoted to truancy and compulsory education, many more than are devoted to exactly what it is that schools and the education system are trying to achieve. This would be fine if it brought into school those young people who are missing, but from the review team's analysis, it has almost no impact. In fact, there is an air in some schools that the young people can come at their own discretion, with very little in the way of sanctions that can be applied if they do not attend. A primary teacher told the review that the average

attendance in her class each day was about half the number enrolled. While this may be somewhat exceptional, our information is that poor attendance is common, especially in some locations. What will be the situation when these young people reach secondary school?

7.   The Act requires that *when a child is enrolled at a school, the child must attend that school each day, and for such parts of each day, as instruction is provided at school for the child.* There are exemptions, of course, but they in no way can account for the number of secondary students enrolled who do not attend when instruction is provided for them. Although a young person may leave school when they turn 15, our interpretation of the Act, although not based on a legal opinion, is that if they are of post compulsory age and are enrolled in a school, they are obliged to attend school until this contract of enrolment is formally ended, either by the student or the school. The terms of this enrolment are determined in the end by the school and the student with their parents having an obligation to see that they are fulfilled.

8.   Students may be suspended by the head teacher if in their opinion their *presence would …be injurious to the health or moral welfare of other persons enrolled at the school, by reason of the person's insolence, repeated disobedience, immoral conduct or serious breach of discipline. Only the Minister may expel someone where the Minister considers it necessary …in the interests of other children attending a Government school….* The Minister may terminate an expulsion and then the student may re-enrol.

9.   The Act also prevents the employment of young people of compulsory age during school hours, and there is a major section on truancy, where there are provisions for *authorised persons*, who include police officers, to visit homes of young people they reasonably believe to be missing school without good cause, and prosecution may result. A search of the records suggests that the last case where a parent was taken to court over their child's non-attendance was in the mid 1980s, and the case was lost. The penalty for truancy *must not exceed $200.* These provisions of the Act need serious re-consideration. Non-attendance at any level of schooling is very serious, but when it begins in primary school it can set a pattern of only going to school at the young person's or parent's or carer's whim. No effective schooling can be based on such patterns.

10.   These restrictions and sanctions were designed for another time. They assume that learning while at school will all take place in a school setting, with students coming to school to be taught by a teacher in front of a class. They assume rolls can be marked, and absences easily followed up. They assume that the outcome of the legislation is to attend school, not to achieve learning outcomes. Any secondary teacher can tell of students who come to school not wanting to be there, disrupting classes to the point where they sabotage the learning of everyone else.

11.   This approach from the 1980s is changing dramatically, especially in secondary schools, with individualised programs, VET classes being made available while at school, work experience, learning while working, learning by distance mode and so on. This flexibility increases the further up the school the student is enrolled, and it is the view of the review team that these arrangements will only increase in complexity and potential value. This does not mean that students will do less 'schoolwork', or that their learning will only occur between 8:00am and 3:00pm. Increasingly, there will be learning provided when and where best suited to the needs of the young people. The issue is not so much that they attend school in the sense of a set of buildings, but that they meet the requirements of a learning program designed mutually between students, the school and the parents or caregivers. The curriculum of a school is all the planned experiences provided by or through the school. Progressively, more of these experiences can be outside the school premises. Checking will become more difficult, and hence the need for regular meetings with a school mentor, and also for teachers to catch students early if they are not meeting their obligations in terms of their learning plans.

12.   The review team questions whether the same compulsory attendance requirements of primary school students, whose face-to-face presence at school on a daily basis is likely to remain the norm, should also apply for the whole of secondary, particularly over Years 10 to 12. At this stage very different requirements might apply. In the primary school, and by and large for the later middle years in secondary, perhaps up to and also including Year 10, we believe the young person should attend school *for such parts of each day as instruction is provided at the school for the child* and there can be no exceptions unless the school approves of them. At Year 10 the exceptions could include planned learning in settings outside school. For Years 11 and 12, rather than this blanket requirement the expectation must be in terms of a clearly written agreement so that young people and their families are fully aware of the requirements for *satisfactory attention to their learning program*.

13.   Sickness is a common reason why young people miss school. Increasingly, though, there is a tendency in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous families for time to be taken as and when the family requires it. Three months around Australia or on overseas holidays, attention to *sorry business*, football matches, two weeks with grandma, are all examples. Young people just take off and go, not always taking with them a process endorsed by the school for continuing to learn while they are away. In our view, the effects of absence must be taken seriously, with learning programs arranged while they are away, and time set aside to learn essential material they have missed when they return. If they move to another school, there should be some formality in the hand-over to the other school, so that the new school is fully aware of the student's planned study program, and how well they are achieving expected outcomes. No young person should fall between the cracks.

14.   There should be a consideration of imposing sanctions on the parents of a young person who has missed school without specific arrangements being made for the absence. If they miss school, they should be required and helped to make up what they have missed. The unfortunate thing is that those with the lowest levels of skill are often the ones who miss the most school—their skills are lower because they miss school, and often they then stay away because they are ashamed of their lack of skill. Thus they become just the ones who need the most teaching.

15.   The pathways mentoring system outlined earlier must include discussions on attendance, and schools and precincts will need to be innovative in designing formalised processes for catching up missed work. These issues are also important in Years 7 to 9, where schools have various strategies to follow them up. Families need to be involved early. It was suggested to the review on many occasions that families in receipt of child support or other benefits should be discontinued if a young person misses school without a satisfactory explanation. It is important to keep effective records of poor attendance, and as soon as it is noticed, action should be taken. We know that weak pedagogy encourages poor attendance, as do other attractions that may be available. Understanding factors that might affect attendance should be considered concurrently with the teaching of the curriculum so that the normal expectations of life can be accounted for and the students fulfil their obligations to the school.

16.   The review team is of the view that the issue of compulsory attendance needs much more discussion in schools and precincts, so that the students, their families and the teachers know what their obligations are, what their respective powers are, and how these may be addressed. No absence should go unremarked and not be followed up to a satisfactory resolution. We believe attendance requirements should be part of the agreement of mutual responsibilities between the school and the student and their parents or caregivers, with the sanctions clear before absences occur. Each school or precinct should put forward its attendance strategy and policy as part of its strategic plan.

17.   Attendance Officers have a special role to play in assisting schools to achieve high levels of attendance. They should focus on the most difficult cases, and the school should know where their energies are being directed. There is always a tendency when appointments are made for a specific purpose other staff to 'leave it to them'. Nothing should be further from reality—the attendance officers should heighten the awareness of teachers and the school to their obligations to achieve high attendance. Attendance officers should work with the schools to fulfil their attendance strategies so that attendance of all students improves, not just those at risk.

18.   Although it is the view of the review team that a supportive approach to school attendance is more likely to have positive results, we accept that there will always be some students, no matter what the school tries to do to change behaviour, for whom nothing seems to work and their behaviour is such that they must be removed from the school. When this occurs, it is even more important that they are followed up on a regular basis by an appropriate agency, and a program arranged that will further their development of appropriate skills or provide for some sort of livelihood activity.

19.   Some Indigenous parents and students expressed the view that consideration should be given to imposing sanctions on the parents of a young person who has missed school without specific arrangements being made for the absence. Such thinking is in line with a recent proposal by the acting chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for a smart card to link welfare payments to the purchase of clothing, food and education, which has received both praise and criticism from Indigenous leaders. While some regard it as a return to paternalistic policies, others such as Noel Pearson (Age, 2003) support the idea as he believes it puts the rights of the child first and will make parents take responsibility for their families. Pearson also acknowledges that child neglect exists in Indigenous families too and that such reform could benefit both Indigenous and non-indigenous young people. The review has considerable sympathy with such an approach, but it will require much community discussion, and significant legislative change at a national level. The Northern Territory Government should participate in any discussions that might eventuate.

20.   As to the matter of compulsory education, the review team is of the opinion that no young person should leave school until the end of the year in which they turn 15, and then only when their Futures Portfolio has been agreed to between the young person, the parents or caregivers, and the school or learning precinct. This portfolio should be a negotiated plan for the future, showing what their next steps might be in terms of work, enterprise, community participation, or further learning. As part of the Futures Portfolio, the levels of literacy, numeracy and technacy the young person has reached should be clearly stated. Eventually, we would hope that no young person will leave school without at least Year 9 literacy, numeracy and technacy levels, or if they do, will need to be an agreement that they will attend classes until these levels have been reached.

21.   The school or precinct should work with young people to develop such a portfolio to support them as they move on to the next step. Learning precincts should incorporate in agreements and negotiations with their local communities, government agencies such as Centrelink and employers, positive supportive plans to progress the education of young people who leave school with gaps in literacy, numeracy and technacy that might prevent them from meaningful

participation in society. If a young person is unable to find paid work or study, then a completed Futures Portfolio detailing plans for an alternative but productive future should accompany any application for benefits from Centrelink or other agencies, so that the next agency can take over the school's mentoring and supporting role.

22.   Until young people are adults, most responsibilities for their futures and preparation for adulthood must rest outside them. There is a lot to be said for the initiation into adulthood that is the cornerstone of traditional Indigenous life. Other groups might profit from appropriate rites of passage in the wider society. Pre-adulthood is a partnership between the young person, their parents and families or caregivers, the school or precinct, and wider society. If any one of these groups does not, or sometimes in the case of parents, cannot share their responsibility, then other agencies must step in to provide a way ahead. If we can achieve this, young adulthood will be much more positive for young people, and many of the social and financial costs of dysfunction will be avoided.

23.   The review believes DEET should negotiate with Centrelink and other relevant Commonwealth government agencies to work more closely with schools and precincts to improve attendance for young people who receive youth allowance or other payments and should work with these agencies to support students in their transition from school to work, further training or higher education.

Precincts

24.   Much has been said in the earlier chapters of the advantages of establishing Learning Precincts, where all the learning opportunities in a region or other grouping are brought together, so that resources can be shared and schools are made part of the communities in which they stand. In addition memoranda of understanding should be developed with other organisations that have dealings with or a role to play with young people. These precincts are intended to make schools an integral part of the community. Secondary schools will wither unless their role in society is strengthened as learning centres that are part of a network on which all people in the precinct may draw to advance their learning. They must be available when the clients (both young people and adults) need their services, and 8:00am to 3:00pm days just will no longer do in many cases. Not that teachers should be expected to work longer hours unless there is suitable compensation, but they may be expected to work different hours, and in many cases have different roles as the requirements for individualised learning and mentoring are taken up.

25.   In Chapter 7, stages in the development of learning precincts were outlined. Legislation is needed to put their establishment into effect. Some of the material contained in the Education Act

about school councils, and some pertaining to colleges may be pertinent, but it is the view of the review team that legislation should be drawn up to achieve the newly stated functions. In this context, there seems little point in having school councils similar to those allowed in the Act. Their actual current role seems to lie somewhere between being a body advisory to the principal, and a body having some significant management functions. The establishment of precincts is designed to achieve a greater degree of local governance than is currently the purview of schools or their councils, and so during the development of each precinct, the question of locally appropriate governance structures should be left to the precinct to decide, within an understood framework, and made part of an overall plan that will be approved by the Government through the advice of DEET and the Quality Services Agency. In a precinct, such structures may well require people from other agencies that work with young people as well as parents and other community members.

26.   In our view, the establishment of learning precincts will drive a change in the nature of education from the 20th Century system of unresponsive individual silos, to a responsive system where the needs of young people can be met in an integrated, coordinated way, more suited to the very different requirements of the 21st Century. Here knowledge becomes the new currency, and intellectual rather than financial capital is the likely origin of resources for the Territory's development. In particular, to arrest the decline in population, to enhance opportunity for enterprises to flourish and particularly for new ones to be started, depends on young people receiving appropriate education and training to provide a lead. Old ways of secondary schooling will not do it, because they have been too focussed on just one path ahead. The multi-pathways we propose, bringing all the resources of a community to bear to offer young people an educational experience relevant to their future, will provide the enterprise the Territory needs. Yet such changes do not happen overnight, and a ten-year program can be expected before steady state is reached. The sooner the changes begin the better.

Integrated services approach

27.   The extent to which the geographic coverage of learning precincts aligns with other regional divisions and authorities will be dependent on which particular schools come together to form precincts, but there would be merit in such alignments. For example, some coincidence with local government boundaries and regional health areas would allow a combined approach to the delivery of services. In remote communities there are relatively small numbers of Indigenous people to be provided with services, and particularly with support to achieve sustainable lifestyles. Many things must occur together. There cannot be effective education unless children are healthy, homes and communities are violence and noise free, regular sleep and food are

possible, and the community lends its full support to the school or precinct and what it is trying to achieve.

28.   The review team have found much support for the concept of an integrated approach, both from government agencies, from schools, and from the people in the communities themselves. There have been recent initiatives to enable such integration to operate. In the past, a community low on one agency's priority list might have been high on another's, and even now a person taking the lead in one agency has no direct power over those from another. We are now seeing the beginnings of joint planning to provide services to a community. We believe a situation of separation is no longer tenable, and although much has been achieved through cooperation and goodwill, much more could be done if lines of authority and responsibility were clear, and there was a single allocation of funds, sourced from all service delivery agencies, but aggregated together, to be treated as a single resource. An integrated approach is particularly important for secondary students, numbers of whom have social, health and identity problems, and yet will be adults in mainstream society in no more than three or four years. Some may already be so in Indigenous society. By the age of 18 there should be some clear view of what those young people are able to do with their lives, that is, to be part of a system of productive livelihoods either on the communities, or elsewhere.

29.   The team saw first hand many examples of problems continuing because there were only marginal mechanisms for treating them on their own merits as ones for which solutions may be found. We saw examples where the preferred approach seemed to be to discuss in which agency's brief the problem resides – and of course, wherever possible it seemed to belong somewhere else – rather than to solve the problem. In this second case, nothing seems to happen, or only slowly. This is particularly true where the issues lie somewhere in both Commonwealth and Territory lines of responsibility. In our view, a problem is a problem is a problem and not simply a health, or education, or law and order, or welfare one. It is there to be solved for the good of the people whom it affects. So long as there are discrete government departments organised on functional rather than regional lines, these kinds of difficulties will always appear. Sometimes people from different departments showing initiative, compassion and goodwill will overcome them, but often issues viewed from only one perspective are seen plainly as 'too hard'.

30.   The education system is often expected to provide secondary education on Indigenous communities where the teachers are expected to live in sub-standard housing, where the community and fringe camps are dysfunctional because of endemic antisocial behaviour, and where the young people face learning difficulties because of deafness and other health problems. It is little wonder that schools, too, spiral into dysfunction. Even so, there are schools doing good

work against almost overwhelming odds, but they should not have to continue to struggle alone, when a concerted attack on the underlying issues would improve all aspects of the community's functioning.

31.   It is difficult for a review of this kind to make recommendations in an area that is a responsibility of different agencies rather than the whole of government together. Yet we were placed in a position to appreciate clearly the effects of a lack of coordination in public services. There were statements to the effect that *we cannot do much about that because it is not in our budget, or does not have our highest priority*. In such an environment, priorities for the various agencies are all out of step. The application of resources in an integrated way to a common task as identified and approved by the local community is the best approach the review team can see, but it is one that has to be driven by the Department of the Chief Minister.

32.   The issue of integrated services is not just a Territory one. The role of the Commonwealth in Territory education, because of the high proportion of Indigenous students to whom services must be provided, is unlike the provision in any other state and territory. We understand that there have been preliminary negotiations between the Territory and the Commonwealth about the provision of services to Indigenous people in the NT. We applaud this initiative, and would go further to say that the funding of Indigenous education should become a joint responsibility of both governments. Already the Commonwealth makes the major funding contribution to the education of Indigenous Territorians in non-Government schools. With the establishment of learning precincts, and as they move to self management, the Commonwealth could fund the Indigenous component of precinct education and training in a manner similar to the way it contributes funds to the non-government and Catholic systems in the NT. In particular, the NT fully funds the remote Catholic schools.

33.   The review team has seen the success of the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs and believe a parallel centre for remote education would be of considerable benefit. What ongoing links it should have with the one for remote health, the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DK CRC), the Desert Peoples Centre (DPC), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and other agencies would need to be worked out. We believe the Commonwealth, supported by other agencies such as the DK CRC, Charles Darwin University (CDU), and BIITE should fund and support such a centre. Remote education is in a run-down state and needs more support to focus on effective pedagogies, alternatives to face-to-face teaching, and the effective preparation of teachers for these environments.

34.   The Territory receives supplementary funding from the Commonwealth for a range of education programs. Unfortunately, the review team found that much of this funding is sporadic,

often for pilot projects and as seed money only, and rarely with long-term guarantees. This is a considerable disadvantage to the effective provision of support programs in schools, particularly for secondary Indigenous students, and also for students with special needs. The necessity to continually re-apply for funds for ATAS tutors, ISAs and other support staff, together with the strict rules and accountability arrangements governing the use of the funds, make it a time consuming and unreliable process. This was seen as a major impediment to continuity of successful initiatives. Once they have been identified, there is a need to provide secure employment for the people who make them work, and to mainstream successful programs through MOUs, realistic implementation plans and commitment to longevity in funding. The establishment of the Quality Services Agency, and the accreditation and performance management of schools and learning precincts, should give the Commonwealth confidence that a system will be in place to advise on the quality of provision, and expenditure against the business of the school or precinct.

35.   Another area where the funding mechanisms should be looked at in the context of the outcomes of this review, is VET in Schools, which is also Commonwealth funded through the Territory Government. We have already proposed that there should be much more vocational, enterprise, and livelihood learning in schools, with the VET component a very important part of it. This is particularly important in Indigenous education, where vocational learning incorporating literacy and numeracy as part of this learning, is so important to life on communities. In this context, the Territory should focus more on enterprise and vocational learning, and there would be merit in re-negotiating funding levels, with provision designed to meet the requirements of communities rather than the 'one size fits all' approach that seems to be the one arising from the ANTA RTO and learning module approach. This is not good enough for our Indigenous people.

36.   Only by undertaking such a concerted approach to bringing about change, particularly in precincts in remote areas, but also in those in urban and regional areas, can some parts of the Territory be brought to a situation where the delivery of secondary education can occur in a positive environment conducive to learning.

37.   The relationship between the Commonwealth and the Territory in the delivery of education to Indigenous people is one that needs urgent attention. It cannot any longer be part of a system designed for the rest of the nation, where in all other jurisdictions the proportion of Indigenous people to be educated is much less than five percent. In the Territory it is 32% for secondary, and more than 40% for primary, and both percentages are growing. There is little if any growth in non-Indigenous numbers. Both the Commonwealth and the Territory Governments must work jointly to provide a unified system for educating Indigenous young people. The establishment of precincts, coupled with the Quality Services Agency, will make this more achievable.

Employment of teachers and other staff

38.   The review team noted that teachers and others employed in schools are employed under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act, which came into force in the early 1990s with its first amendments in 1993, and the repealing of the Teaching Service Amendment Acts of 1981 and 1982. Under the Act, teachers are employed by the Chief Executive Officer of DEET who has responsibilities *inter alia* to

- assign duties to employees
- evaluate performance of employees
- assist in undertaking relevant training
- appoint people to permanent positions, and require a period of six months probation except where the CEO is satisfied by the merit of the case that probation is not required.

39.   While it may be a tidy approach to have all public sector employees under one Act, an exception has been made for police—and the role and requirements of teaching, too, are very different from those of a public servant. In future, teachers and other professionals and para-professionals working as a team to deliver the learning in schools and precincts, should be engaged under terms and conditions that serve the needs of individual precincts, that will allow for curriculum changes to be adapted to quickly, and for them to be engaged to fulfil professional requirements of the various positions in schools and precincts. While the review team has not seen it as its brief to follow this course to the point where we can advise on terms and conditions to best serve the new precincts, this is a matter we believe should be taken up by DEET as the precincts develop. As precincts gain more governance responsibility, they may have the ultimate management responsibility – the employment of staff, and all that entails.

Implementing change

40.   Successful change requires the willing support of those who are going to be affected by it. This is illustrated simply by the Dannemiller-Tyson change formula $C = V \times D > R$, where C = Change, V = a positive Vision for the future, D = Dissatisfaction with the status quo, and R = natural human Resistance to change (Brady *et al*, 2003). It is the review team's view, that for the Territory in this formula, D is high and R is relatively low, because so many teachers have seen good things elsewhere that they would like to try. We are optimistic that the value of 'readiness for change' is high, but the capability to achieve it successfully is lower than we would have hoped, and hence the emphasis placed in the report on capacity building, and staging proposed changes.

41.   Throughout the consultation phase the review team heard again and again that there is a need for change – not just 'fiddling at the edges', but major change to the secondary education we deliver to young people in the Northern Territory, and how we go about it. Parents, teachers, employers, and most importantly the young people themselves – all have asked for change, and said they are ready for it. There is dissatisfaction with the status quo. The review team has listened to what Territorians have had to say, and as a result we have developed a vision for secondary education that will meet the needs of the Territory and its young people in the 21st Century. The recommendations of the review provide a framework for implementing change over the next decade. We believe that significant progress towards realising the 'new territory' that we have mapped out can be made in the immediate and medium-term future. Other challenges will take many more years to address, and the pace of change will need to be more gradual.

42.   This report documents the 'dissatisfaction' that has been expressed with the current state of secondary education, and 'articulates a vision' for the future; the additional ingredient required for successful implementation of the review's recommendations is the buy-in of key stakeholders who are prepared to overcome 'natural resistance to change'. It is now up to all those with a stake in secondary education in the Territory to become involved in the change process – to drive it or contribute to it at government, system, school, classroom and community levels, working together to realise the vision for the 'new Territory' that they have helped us to design.

43.   Change of the magnitude we are proposing does not come cheap. Nor is it easy to manage or achieve. Thorough planning and thoughtful management of change will be required. While some of the recommendations can be implemented within existing resources, delivery of this bold agenda will require Government to provide substantial additional funding over the next five years for implementation of the major initiatives we have proposed, and additional recurrent funding for education in the longer term, although there is potential to offset these costs by some limited savings. It will also be essential for the NT government to negotiate extra resources from the Commonwealth Government, particularly to address the large-scale change and improvement required in the area of Indigenous education.

44.   A possible timeline for implementation of the major initiatives is as follows.

2004		2005		2006		2007		2008
Increase focus on **quality teaching and learning** – delivery and support								
Increase **capacity and capability** – training, recruitment, professional development, performance management, leadership								
Develop **Learning Precincts**				Fully implement **Learning Precincts**				
		Prepare Years 6 & 7 students for move to high school		Fully implement new **stages of schooling**				
Amend **legislation**								
Establish **Quality Services Agency**								
Negotiate intra- and inter-**government funding and support**								
Re-design and re-focus **systemic support** – teaching and learning support, data, integrated services								
Improve **service delivery** – ICT, infrastructure, remote delivery, VET								

45.   In the end, it is for the Government to decide the directions for the future. There has never been a time where a bold move forward in education is more needed, if the next generation of Territorians is to be well prepared to take on the very special challenges of the 21st Century. Our evidence is that the old strategies, structures, and approaches just will not do. Everything now does interact and come together. There are no simple solutions, but structures that allow people to show flexibility, enterprise and leadership are more likely to provide solutions that will work. Systems that are accountable and have clear legislative backing for what they do will serve young people best. Secondary education must change; and it will function best when it operates less like the traditional schools of the past. We have provided a framework within which the transformation of secondary education can occur for the benefit of the Territory's young people. We look forward to its implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enabling Change

It is recommended that

45.   the NT Government consider the possibility of preparing a new Education Act as part of the lead up to achieving statehood, advised by wide ranging public discussion and encapsulating the fundamental purposes now seen for a 21st Century education and training system; and that it amend the current Act until such time as the new one is prepared.

46. the NT Government legislate that a student may not leave school or other forms of accredited education or training until the end of the year in which they turn 15 years of age.

47. to improve student attendance, NT DEET

- monitor and analyse the attendance patterns and practices in primary schools, and determine 'at risk' levels as a basis for action so that children do not develop poor attendance habits before they reach secondary school

- continue this analysis and action into the compulsory years of secondary school attendance

- require schools and learning precincts to draw up their own strategies for attendance, and the actions to be taken when students are absent

48. NT DEET negotiate with Centrelink and the relevant Commonwealth authorities to

- work more closely with schools to improve attendance for those students on youth allowance and other payments

- to offer support to students in their transition from school to work, further training, higher education and/or community participation.

49. to allow for a more integrated and strategic approach to education in remote areas, the NT Government

- approach the Commonwealth for funds to establish a Centre for Remote Education

- set up a process whereby an overall framework is established and resources and support for the centre are provided by NT DEET and other educational providers, including CDU, BIITE, the DPC, the DK CRC and such other bodies as have an interest in this area.

50. to improve the delivery of services to young people, the NT Government approve that

- an integrated services approach to solving the problems of various towns and communities be adopted wherever practicable, based on the learning precinct structure

- the learning precinct responsible for education in the region or area be an integral part of the integrated services approach to improving the total learning environment

- the Department of the Chief Minister coordinate the integrated services approach, including the involvement of relevant Commonwealth government agencies

- a cross-portfolio taskforce be established to manage the overall task of integrating education into the total service provision, the taskforce to consist of members of each portfolio and include appropriate Commonwealth funding agencies

- a taskforce be established at the town or community level, with a person from one of the portfolios to be in charge of the total service provision in that location

- funding in the 2004-2005 and subsequent financial years be achieved by taking funds 'off the top' of each department's budget until an ongoing item for this activity becomes a firm part of the Territory's budget.

51. the NT Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, coordinate and fund a bi-lateral approach to the provision of education for the Indigenous young people of the Territory, and that this joint approach focus particularly on

   - the educational needs of Indigenous communities, as a first priority
   - improving the quality of life for families on remote Indigenous communities, including appropriate improved infrastructure and services for families, housing, health, recreation, training and employment
   - providing targeted programs integral to the improvement of secondary education provision to tackle issues of substance abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and domestic violence, and other activities that run counter to providing sound education
   - developing within secondary schools and/or precincts small enterprises of value to a community where young people can learn to provide a service, as well as build their skill levels
   - providing the funding that is needed to achieve the task, consolidated so that precincts can manage their education and training provision in a manner that best suits their particular context.

52. NT DEET hold discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including the AEU, CPSU, CDU, BIITE, industry and business and parents as early as possible, to negotiate a collaborative, positive and supportive approach to proposed changes, based on the best interests of the students.

CHAPTER 14
THE WAY FORWARD

1.   In this review we have explored new territory. It is new territory in the sense that we look at secondary education anew, to propose a system different from the one designed for other times. It is new territory because we see the Northern Territory as being on the cusp of extensive development, to parallel that which began in the states in the 1950s, and for which the young people now in our schools will provide the leadership. It is new territory because we are proposing new approaches to teaching and learning, more suited to the way the bulk of young people learn today, with all its focus on electronic and digital media. It is new territory because we are proposing a new way of organising schools to be responsible within their own precinct. Above all, it is new territory because we propose new ways of providing secondary education to the Indigenous young people who have largely missed out, particularly on communities. In this case it is new territory for them and for the rest of us. We describe a new educational territory for a new economic, social, and developing Northern Territory that will attract people, and where new and different enterprises will arise across its broad expanse. The Territory is maybe soon to become a state with all the national and international status such a move will bring, and an absolute and necessary requirement is the best possible system of secondary education to underpin its future.

2.   We have identified major issues that impede the focusing of secondary education on new ways forward, not only for young people, but the Territory as a whole. We have proposed a number of recommendations and policy directions, which we believe will set up education in general and secondary education in particular to prepare young people for the not insignificant challenges they will face in the 21st Century. We are entering the information age where capital will be more than ever human, with knowledge and its manipulation providing the keys to success. We are entering a world where we are part of a global economy, currently contaminated by uncertainty in terms of the ongoing impact of terrorism. Australia finds itself now looking northward with some uncertainty as it moves into ever closer engagement with that part of the world, a part to which the Territory provides the gateway. Even though Darwin is a long way from the other capital cities of Australia, and closer to many in Asia, the rest of our country must soon discover the Territory in new ways if we are to capitalise on the opportunities we have in the Top End. The railway, industries associated with the gas pipeline, and the development of knowledge from the desert in the Centre will change the shape of the NT economy. More and more people from other states will come to stay, as new opportunities beckon.

3.   The Territory has a population now with 25% under age 15, and of these 40% are Indigenous— a young Territory of promise, yet with a group of people still denied access to our workforce because of low skill levels and limited opportunity. We have examined Indigenous

issues closely, and find a genuine will particularly among many young people to want it 'both ways'—to be part of the Indigenous way of doing things and viewing the world, as well as wanting the skills and abilities to function fully in mainstream society. We are not yet very good at providing the opportunity to fulfil their ambition, but the review has have made some suggestions based on evidence put before us that may well work, if there is strong support from the communities, and there are good teachers to develop their skills.

4.   In our terms of reference we were charged to investigate seven major issues. Although the structure of the report does not follow this structure exactly, we do deal with each of them in considerable detail. We have produced *a profile of the secondary student cohort in the Northern Territory* in Chapter 2, which is largely descriptive supported by statistics. We were surprised how difficult it was to obtain some statistics that would have helped to create a clearer picture, and have made recommendations for this aspect to be improved. This is particularly true of the destinations of secondary students after they leave school. If we were clearer about what happens then, and particularly about the barriers to work or further education, or the particular skill needs they were lacking, effective modifications can be made to the secondary education experience to address them. 'After sales service' for students following their secondary education is not yet high on any priority list, even though employer representatives informed us that they had considerable concerns about the 'job readiness' of young school leavers.

5.   We have *assessed the comparability of outcomes achieved by urban and remote secondary students* and found that the remote students are considerably below the performance level of those in urban areas. We address the situation in Chapter 8, Indigenous Education and have taken a broader perspective in Chapter 4, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting. We have built on the Learning Lessons report (1999), focusing particularly on proposals about secondary education. We have taken their stages in the development of community-controlled schools as the basis for our own proposal for the establishment of learning precincts—a proposal that we believe will significantly strengthen education not only on communities, but in the rest of the Territory as well.

6.   We have reviewed *existing policy, planning procedures and accountability measures* for secondary education and have made suggestions for their improvement. We took up the issue of accountability in Chapter 11 where we propose a re-shaping of the system to meet new needs and in Chapter 12, Quality and Accountability. We address policy and legislation in Chapter 13, Enabling Change. In the pursuit of quality we propose that all schools be accredited, and in Chapter 12 as the bulwark of quality and accountability we propose the establishment of a Quality Services Agency that will report directly to the Minister.

7.   We have *identified and assessed internal and external impacts on secondary provision* throughout the report. We have particularly addressed issues relating to ICT in Chapter 10, Improving Service Delivery, but this too is an issue explored in several other chapters of the report. For example, it is given as an obvious answer to some of the problems of delivery to remote communities.

8.   We have *identified opportunities for expanded pathways particularly through VET* in Chapter 4, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting, and elsewhere. We have taken the issue of pathways as being one of the most important we had to resolve, and it was at the core of our response to issues that resulted in our proposing to establish learning precincts. We have also *identified options for future secondary education provision* by making the young people the centre of our considerations throughout the report. We begin in Chapter 3, Teaching and Learning and expand on it in Chapter 5, Stages of Schooling, in which we explore the stages of development of the young people in secondary school and match them to how and what they should be taught.

9.   *Options for the future* are further explored in Chapter 9, Building Capacity and Capability and in Chapter 11, Re-shaping the System. Our most targeted response to this term of reference is our proposal to establish learning precincts in urban, regional and remote parts of the Territory. This approach is breaking new ground in Australia, although the states have been working toward such a solution through various partial answers. The external consultants we engaged near the end of the process advised that we are being 'admirably ambitious', and that the solutions we are proposing will have national currency. We have given extensive treatment to our proposals, in two chapters, Chapter 6, Learning Precincts, which outlines the concept and how it will improve learning for the Territory's young people, and Chapter 7, Establishing Learning Precincts, which outlines a process whereby they might be established.

10.   Our major vision is to establish an education system in the Territory that has as its core the learning precinct, an integrated organisation that will be responsive to locally-based educational needs, linking all schools and other institutions and enterprises that have interactions with young people in the designated region. Government schools will be linked in a common management structure, while other organisations including non-government schools can be linked through memoranda of understanding or other agreements. It is expected that there will be about seven in urban and regional NT and as many as eight in more remote parts of the Territory. They will provide the flexibility to manage local diversity, share resources more equitably and meet enterprise, socio-economic, cultural, and community needs. We find the possibilities of such an arrangement exciting, making many of the problems of delivery we saw less difficult to solve. A good example is assisting with the transitions secondary students face—from primary to secondary, from upper middle to senior years, from school to work or further study.

11.   Plans that detail implementation strategies have been outlined in a separate document to guide the review implementation team. We have estimated funding required over the next five years to start the process of change. Substantial amounts are from the NT Government and Commonwealth government are needed to bring about the massive changes required if the bulk of the Indigenous population is to be brought to the standard of other secondary students, and all the students of the Territory to standards that are met in other states. There is a real need to improve the level of performance of the middle group in the Year 12 TER scores when compared with a similar group of students in South Australia. Secondary education must be given a priority for funding at least as high as that provided in other states. That it is not is shown to be so by the Commonwealth Grants Commission data referred to in Chapter 12.

12.   When we had concluded the major findings of the review, we tested them against another approach that allowed us to look closely at what we had proposed in a new way. This framework provided by one of our external consultants, gave eight dimensions
- Learning
- Teaching
- Curriculum
- Student well-being
- Leadership and management
- Parents and families
- Community partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluating the system.

The review team was pleased to discover that we had covered each of these areas in significant detail, and we invite readers to use the same set of lenses to judge our findings. In learning we have placed the emphasis on tailoring it to the individual, with Years 7 and 10 being points where the learning path ahead is chosen and strategies determined for successful outcomes. In teaching we have focussed on the quality of pedagogy, advising that it should be designed to match the requirements of the learner at each particular stage in their development. We have advocated a much closer link between curriculum and the process of teaching of it, and we are highly supportive both of the NT Curriculum Framework itself, and the moves to match pedagogy to achieve the planned outcomes. On the other hand, we believe much work is still to be done to integrate vocational learning into the total secondary curriculum. VET in schools and school based apprenticeships, admirable in themselves, should not be add-ons to the school curriculum, but integral parts of it.

13.   Student well-being was at the core of our approach to this review. Not just the well-being of those in urban centres and towns, but all Territorians, and the chapter on Indigenous education

addresses specific concerns in this area. More generally though, the proposals we have put forward for the sound mentoring of young people on their passage through secondary school, advising on pathways and personal issues during this period of rapid development, to be supported by other professionals such as counsellors and psychologists, as well as teachers, is central to learning success.

14. Leadership and management receive considerable attention in Chapter 9, Building Capacity and Capability. Good schools have good leaders, and under such leadership good teachers flourish. We spend some time on strategies to develop not only the leaders currently in place, but also those who clearly have the potential of taking a leadership role. Leadership is not just about principals and senior staff who know how to manage schools. Leadership is about focussing on the quality of the pedagogy, having the evidence on which to base decisions, knowing best practice, evaluating programs that are being tried. Leaders set the examples; they know that their core business is supporting young people in their learning and teachers in their teaching. They know how to have parents participate in what their school is trying to do for their children. The future of the secondary schools in the NT depends on the quality of leadership. Parents and families are the school's clients, and we outline the importance of an agreement of mutual responsibilities between the student, their parents or caregivers, and the school. Delivering on this contract is a two way street—on the part of the young person with their parents, and the school with its teachers. Good schools have good relationships built on mutual respect and to focus on achieving quality, schools should have business plans to identify what they intend to achieve, that are available to the parents of the school and the wider community.

15. Successful schools are those with effective partnerships with parents, employers, other schools, the department, Centrelink, and other agencies. The issue of partnerships came to be central to what we are proposing. We found there were too many problems when the school acted as if it were a silo separate from the rest of society, and particularly if it operated separately from other schools. To overcome these difficulties, we have proposed the Learning Precinct, which brings together government schools in a geographic region as an interacting group, with links to non-government schools, VET and higher education providers, other agencies dealing with young people, and the wider community.

16. The precinct focuses on the opportunities for young people to learn, no matter where it may occur, and provides learning options that could not be afforded through any other process. The states are bringing about some aggregations of schools and other educational institutions into groupings, but their very size makes progress slow. The small size of the Territory at least in population terms makes this a feasible option to be completed in a relatively short time frame. The divisions between schools, schools and other educational institutions, and schools and other

organisations that work with young people, have made effective action on some fronts difficult in the past. We believe the establishment of precincts will solve many of these problems, not only in towns and urban areas, but in Indigenous communities as well.

17.   The final lens we propose to use to examine our report and its recommendations is the one of monitoring and evaluating the system. There was much advice received as outlined at the beginning of Chapter 12, Quality and Accountability, that parents and many other stakeholders wish to know how well individual students are achieving, and also how good their school is. Do they have quality teachers, and are they continuing to learn effectively? This issue was so important that we are proposing a Quality Services Agency to advise on all aspects of the quality of the system. This Agency will focus in a more integrated way than is currently the case on student outcomes, curriculum, teachers and the schools themselves. This organisation will be separate from DEET and will apply to all schools and precincts in the Territory. Such an approach frees DEET to see as major roles the support of teaching and learning across the system, managing the change process, assisting in the establishment of precincts, and providing the Government with data on which to base its decisions about funding and policy.

18.   It is the view of the review team that we meet the expectations that come from the eight-lens approach to reviewing the health of a system, and areas where change is most likely to be beneficial. These lenses should be used from time to time to check how effectively the change process proposed in this report is being implemented, and particularly that the changes are improving learning for young people. This is a challenge to individual precincts and schools, the Quality Services Agency, and above all to DEET itself.

19.   In the event of Statehood being achieved, the Territory will have an increasingly national outlook. It will have increasing responsibility for playing host to defence and other national services. Darwin is a portal to Asia, as Alice Springs is a portal to the desert for much of the rest of Australia. These perspectives will have to be expanded by the Territory and explored in terms of energy provision, tourism, transport and telecommunications infrastructure, railway access, and expanding desert as well as tropical knowledge. All will need to be serviced by a well-trained workforce prepared to live out their lives in the Territory, and sound secondary education building individual strengths is crucial to that development.

20.   Education and training are not about schools alone. There are too many other sources of learning for young people in a community for them to be ignored, whether it be part-time work, sporting and cultural activities, the internet, a range of easily accessible media, and each other. There are also other agencies that can affect the lives of young people — Centrelink, health and welfare agencies, the police service, churches, and the like. All are part, we believe, of the

precinct in which learning occurs among young people. Wherever possible, the whole precinct must be the focus of our attention. Secondary schools as we know them will change as other agencies expand their roles, knowledge comes from an ever expanding range of places, and the education industry responds to the knowledge revolution on our doorstep.

21.   The effective governance of schools creates the conditions for the development of purposeful and dynamic pedagogies or ways of teaching. This governance is both at school and precinct level and at system level, with the best balance of the powers between the two still to be established. Currently, all schools in the Government system could be considered One Big School with the DEET CE as the principal who determines policies, with responsibilities delegated to the campus level. This was probably an appropriate approach when the Act was written in the 1980s, but there are now many non-government schools in the Territory that receive large amounts of government money, yet are effectively 'self-governing'. Why should state-owned secondary schools be different? The issue of managing schools was taken up in Chapter 7, Establishing Learning Precincts.

22.   One school principal told the review team that *the context **is** the curriculum,* which in the way it was meant referred to providing a curriculum suited to the place where teaching was occurring. On the other hand, it could be an insight that may bedevil teachers and schools. The context in the contemporary school is the learning that occurs, how students build connections for life within school and between school and the wider world. Young people must be engaged emotionally and cognitively and teachers must be prepared to say and to act as if *this learning matters, and I will not give up on it or you.* In the end it is the leadership in the school that makes the difference, an issue we develop to some depth in Chapter 9, Building Capacity and Capability.

23.   This raises the issue of whether the school culture makes the child or the child makes the school culture. Twenty years ago this would not have been a question. 'This is how we do things around here' was the way it was, and the student had a responsibility to conform. We saw examples where this has changed to 'how do we change things around here so that we can conform to what young people want to do?'. This dilemma is still to be resolved in many schools, exemplified by a teacher saying she was leaving the school because she was not going to be called an …. (obscenity) again and have nothing much done about it. Nothing points to the need for effective school leadership more dramatically than something like this.

24.   We did see effective programs in schools to alert their communities to what they are doing, to allow parents to see either first hand what today's young people can do, or the expectations held for them. However, there is a competition between schools, between Government and non-Government, particularly in Alice Springs, and among Government schools, particularly in Darwin.

Unfortunately, there is not enough emphasis on parents being able to make an informed choice. This is not about giving 'star ratings' or creating 'league tables', but being transparent about what goes on in schools, providing evidence of the kind of place it is, and how it adds value to the individuals therein.

25.   While we saw many staff doing the good things we have described, their number needs to be greater. There will have to be significant change in the approaches and practices of some teachers and teaching teams if they are to achieve better outcomes for their students through what we have proposed in this report. Some teaching positions in the Territory are difficult for any staff member, and are managed better by some than others. This is particularly true on some communities, but these are by no means the only places where there are uninterested students and hard to manage classes. Careful staff selection is required for such posts, and ongoing support is needed for teaching and learning to be effective.

26.   So we conclude as we began. The review has been about all the young people of the Territory and their right to access quality, affordable education and training, no matter how difficult this may be to deliver. What we propose focuses squarely on this issue, whatever the setting. It will seem like new territory for some. For others, they will relish the opportunities to improve learning and to expand pathways and opportunities that our proposals will allow them to take up, both for young people and their teachers. It is for Government to provide the policy framework, for the Department of Employment, Education and Training to provide leadership, drive and support, and for the schools and the learning precincts to focus on young people in new ways so that they can achieve effective, sustainable lives.

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APPENDIX A
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Context

In order to enable Territorians to meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing, global and technologically advanced world, the NT Government is committed to creating the 'Smart Territory' through 'Building Better Education'. This commitment includes improving secondary education, by working to ensure that all students in urban, rural and remote communities will have the opportunity receive high quality secondary education, by ensuring that the delivery of secondary education is appropriate to each school community's needs, and by building real pathways from school to training to skilled jobs. High quality education and training for our young people are essential if they are to become productive participants in the social and economic life of the NT. Therefore the Government is commissioning a comprehensive report on secondary education in the Northern Territory, to be developed during 2003.

Secondary education in the NT was last reviewed in 1991-92, by the Education Advisory Council, although not comprehensively. The focus of that review was on the outcomes of the structural changes introduced to secondary schools in 1986, and whether further changes should be made. It also considered the point at which all urban primary students should transfer to secondary schools. While Government accepted the EAC report 'Continuity and Change', it did not action the recommendations made.

In 1999 a task group undertook a 'Re-design of Curriculum Functions and Review of Assessment and Certification'. The recommendations of the task group were accepted, and led to a number of changes to requirements of secondary schools in relation to curriculum implementation and assessment and reporting practices, designed to give schools greater freedom and opportunities to meet the needs of all students in their particular context.

Currently in 2002 a review of school infrastructure titled 'Options to Improve the Utilisation of Schools' is in progress, as is a 'Review of the Staffing Formula for NT Government Schools'.

In 2002, secondary education services are provided by more than 60 Government and non-Government schools in the Northern Territory, to over 12,000 students living in urban, rural and remote communities. There are junior secondary schools in urban settings providing for students in Years 7-10, comprehensive secondary schools catering for students in Years 8-12, and senior colleges with students in Years 11 and 12 only; an open education centre providing distance education services for secondary students; area schools which include the primary years as well as students in Years 8-10; and an assortment of schools in remote communities providing post primary and secondary education, depending on the needs of the students in those communities. The report will consider all aspects of secondary education provision by Government schools in these settings, and recommend future directions. Input will be sought from the non-Government school education sectors.

Terms of Reference

The consultant is required to undertake full consultation with all stakeholder groups, and investigate secondary education provision in other Australian jurisdictions, and internationally as appropriate, in order to

1. produce a profile of the secondary student cohort in the Northern Territory and current urban and non-urban education provision for them, including associated resourcing and support systems, and determine the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of this provision in meeting the diverse educational needs of secondary students in the NT

2. assess the comparability of the outcomes achieved by urban and remote secondary students within the Territory, and the outcomes of NT students with those of students in other jurisdictions

3. review existing policy, planning procedures and accountability measures for secondary education provision in the NT, and make recommendations for improvement

4. identify and assess internal and external impacts on current and future secondary education provision in the NT, and make recommendations for ways to address these

5. identify opportunities for expanding pathways, particularly through Vocational Education and Training (VET), and for improving student retention rates

6. identify options for future secondary education provision that will lead to improved outcomes, and meet the expectations of stakeholders

7. prepare plans that detail implementation strategies for these options, and identify associated resource implications.

APPENDIX B

STEERING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP

Terms of Reference

The Steering Committee will advise the Minister on the effective functioning of the consultancy team and the preparation of an appropriate report to the Government on Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory.

In particular, the Steering Committee will:

- approve the project plan

- meet regularly with the principal consultant and relevant consultancy team members, and particularly at key milestone points

- provide advice and guidance to the consultancy team

- monitor progress and the achievement of project objectives

- monitor expenditure as appropriate

- promote and support the project in appropriate forums

- through the Chair, provide information and advice to Government about project progress and any significant issues that arise

- through the Chair, provide information and advice to the Vice-Chancellor of the Northern Territory University and to the Executive Board of the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training about project progress and any significant issues that arise

- receive and comment on a draft project report in July 2003

- receive and comment on the final project report in September 2003

- accept the final report prior to its presentation to the Northern Territory Government.

Membership

- Mr Peter Plummer – Chief Executive DEET (Chair)

- Ms Donna Ah Chee – Deputy Director Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

- Mr Maurie Ryan – Kalkaringi Community Council

- Ms Annie Gastin – ABC Radio broadcaster

- Miss Elaine Loh – 2nd year Law/Business student at Charles Darwin University

- Ms Linda Mackenzie – Assistant Under Treasurer

- Mr Don Tilakaratne – Retired Engineer

- Mr Don Zoellner – Executive Director Centralian College.

APPENDIX C
REFERENCE GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP

Terms of Reference

Members of the Reference Group for the *Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* project have been selected to provide input at key times during the life of the project.

Reference Group members will:

- provide appropriate and relevant input at key points in the project through participation in scheduled meetings with the principal consultant and members of the consultancy team
- act as points of contact for the consultancy team in relation to specific questions or requests for further information or advice
- assist with liaison between the consultancy team and the stakeholder groups they represent
- act as a sounding board for the consultancy team
- contribute actively to discussions about current secondary education provision in the Northern Territory and options for enhanced future provision
- act as promoters and supporters of the project.

Membership

1.	Dr Brian Devlin (Chair)	Chair Education Advisory Council	Education Advisory Council
2.	Mr Rod Smith	Teacher Sanderson High	AEU NT
3.	Ms Susan Taylor	Parent	NT COGSO
4.	Ms Alex Williams	CDU higher education student	Young Territorians
5.	Ms Maria Scaturchio	CDU higher education student	Young Territorians
6.	Mr Joel Suradi	CDU TAFE student	Young Territorians
7.	Mr Steven Rushforth	Principal Nhulunbuy High School	ANTSEL
8.	Mr George Hewitson	Principal Kalkaringi CEC	ANTSEL
9.	Mr Chris Tudor	Principal St Phillips College	Non-Government schools
10.	Ms Fran Kilgariff	Mayor Alice Springs Town Council	Community
11.	Mr Tom Evison	Senior Lecturer School of Education and Humanities	BIITE
12.	Ms Georgie Barker	Education Manager	NT Minerals Council Inc
13.	Mr John Dove	General Manager Schools	DEET
14.	Mr John Morgan	Principal Gillen Primary	DEET primary principals
15.	Ms Sibylle Brautigam	Manager Strategy Development	DEET Employment & Training Division

PROJECT METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The design of the project methodology provided the fullest possible evidentiary base from which the Terms of Reference for *Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* could be addressed. In general terms, the methodology was in four phases. The phases were designed to collect and collate existing information, as well as gather new data through both submissions and consultations across the Territory from young people themselves, parents, teachers, principals, other school personnel, business groups, community organisations and DEET personnel.

The following overview relates the four phases to the timeline for the project. After this, detail is provided on the participants, sites, instruments, submissions and consultation processes.

Phase 1: Project design and planning (January–February 2003)

Phase 2: Data collection (March–June 2003)

Phase 3: Data analysis and synthesis (June–July 2003)

Phase 4: Report development and presentation (August–September 2003)

Participants and sites

This section is reported in two parts: (a) Submissions and (b) Consultations.

Instruments: How were the submissions and consultations structured?

Both submissions and consultations used the same material as triggers for discussion and response. This material was made available both online and in the package of information sent to all consultation sites for dissemination in advance of the site visits. While the structure of face-to-face discussions did not always align with the structure of these materials, responses were often received in this form. The trigger material is set out below:

What are the **strengths** of secondary education in the Northern Territory?

What aspects or features do you think we should keep? Why?

What are the **challenges** of secondary education in the NT?

Which aspects or features should be discontinued or replaced? Why?

Which aspects or features should be kept but need to be improved? How might they be improved?

How can we ensure secondary education provision is fair for all NT students?

What opportunities are there for developing educational **pathways** that will encourage students to stay at school and prepare them better for work, vocational education and training, university and/or constructive participation in the community?

What **new ideas** should be introduced to secondary education in the NT?

Briefly describe these ideas.

Explain why they should be introduced. What will be the benefits for student learning?

When answering these questions, you might wish to consider some of the following areas in your response…

A. Schools – access; facilities and resources; relationships between schools and the community

B. Students – the special needs of all students, including: boys; girls; Indigenous; migrant; ethnic; high achievers; special education students; students at risk

C. Indigenous education – urban; remote communities

D. The Information Age – preparing students for the knowledge economy, the changing world of work; reducing isolation and remoteness

E. Range of pathways for students – within schools and post school – workforce, Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education, community participation

F. Schooling transitions – moving from primary to secondary; from junior secondary to senior secondary; from senior secondary to work, community involvement or further education

G. Teachers – finding teachers; keeping teachers; professional development

H. Curriculum delivery – what is taught in schools; how it is taught in order to serve the needs of all students

I. Assessment of student achievement – what we measure; how and when we measure.

J. Support systems – the relationship between schools and office-based services eg curriculum, student services, Indigenous education

Submissions

The review team received 111 submissions. The submissions were solicited by the placement of advertisements in all major NT newspapers, some resulting talkback radio publicity, and through the project website at http://www.edfuture.ntu.edu.au/submission.htm. Submissions were encouraged by any means that respondents could access. Online submission facilities were available, email submissions were a popular mode of responding to the terms of reference, and in some cases, such as the meeting of personnel from Arnhem Homeland Learning Centres, input was facilitated by consultants, transcribed and accepted as a submission.

Consultations

Teams of consultants visited 134 sites across the Territory, including 40 consultation visits to remote Indigenous communities, 6 public forums and 5 meetings with the steering committee and 4 meetings with the reference group. On all these occasions, respondents were asked to be open and honest about their individual, family and community needs for secondary education, and how they believed these needs might best be met.

The consultation schedule was prepared so as to ensure maximum opportunity for the widest range of participants to interact with the project team. Consistent with our belief that young people should be at the core of this Review's considerations, the team members spoke with young people at every school they visited. The Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians provided extremely valuable input; and in order to ensure the Review team heard from the widest range of youth possible, a mini-project was undertaken to locate, talk to and solicit the assistance of young people of secondary school age outside the school environment. This sample of some 100 young people represented a cross-section of the community of young people in Darwin including current school students, unemployed persons, tertiary and TAFE students, and those students who are currently working. The majority of the young people were met while attending the SHAK Youth Centre, participating in the Darwin Youth Beat and Palmerston Youth Beat Outreach services, attending Casey House management meetings, participating in the Language Literacy and Numeracy program (NTU or participating in the Darwin Juvenile Justice Diversionary program.

In many cases and where it was considered important to do so, the consultancy teams stayed overnight at remote locations, while in some cases, compromises had to be made because of transport availability and accommodation. It was also considered important to visit as many sites as possible in the time available so as to build a more complete picture of the NT purposes and needs for secondary education. In addition, the team responded to specific requests to visit some locations, and without exception these requests were incorporated into the schedule of visits. In most cases, consultations were conducted by two or three review team members representing members from the three sub-groups of the support team (Charles Darwin University [formerly Northern Territory University], NT DEET and the Independent Consultants). For predominantly Indigenous sites, an Indigenous Support team member was engaged as a member of the review team, and interpreters were used where required.

In addition, the review spent a great deal of effort in ensuring that parents were interviewed. These discussions occurred both at schools and through a series of community forums that were advertised well in advance and promoted through various forms of media. Parent bodies were always involved in the consultations, and the team made a point of talking to the ASSPA committees wherever possible. In spite of best efforts, parent attendance at the public forums

was quite low, and the review team was therefore pleased to receive the additional consultation material from the Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) Palmerston Rural Region, in the form of a survey of 82 parents and other community members of the Palmerston area.

Consultations Record

SCHOOLS	GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS
Alcoota	Alice Springs Youth and Health Workers
Alice Springs High School	Alice Springs youth
Alice Springs School of the Air	Association of Independent Schools NT
	Australian Council of Education Leaders (ACEL)
ANZAC Hill High School	Australian Education Union NT (AEU NT) annual conference delegates (Tennant Creek)
Alyangula Area School	AEU NT President and Secretary
Angurugu CEC	Australian Science and Maths School – Flinders University
Areyonga	Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) group, Darwin
Barunga Community Education Centre (CEC)	Association of NT School Educational Leaders (ANTSEL) City Cluster
Batchelor Area School	Association of NT School Educational Leaders (ANTSEL) Executive
Borroloola CEC	Association of Independent Schools NT
Casuarina Senior College	Arrente Language Group
Centralian College	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE)
Darwin High School	Callistemon House, Katherine
Don Dale Education Centre	Catholic Education Office
Dripstone High School	Central Australian Education and Training Reference Group
Elliott CEC	Centralian College Council
Garrthalala Homeland Learning Centre	Central Land Council at Hamilton Downs
Gunbalanya CEC	Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians
Harts Range	Commonwealth Chief Executive Officers
Henbury School	Community Corrections
Irrkelentye	Coordination Committee (NT Government)
Jabiru Area School	Curriculum Services Branch (DEET)
Jilkminggan School	Darwin youth
Kalkaringi CEC	Darwin Youth Advisory Network
Katherine High School	DEET Leaders Forum participants
Kormilda College	DEET office-based staff Alice Springs
Lajamanu CEC	DEET Senior Executive
Ltentye Apurte CEC	Defence Community Organisation
Maningrida CEC	Department of Education, Science and

SCHOOLS	GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS
	Training (DEST) executive
Milingimbi School	Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) staff
Minyerri School	Dripstone School Council, ASSPA
Nhulunbuy High School	Employment and Training Division (DEET)
Nightcliff High School	Financial Services Branch (DEET)
NT Christian College / Marrara Christian School	Gap Youth Centre
NT Open Education Centre (NTOEC)	General Managers Schools (DEET)
Numbulwar CEC	General Manager School Services Division (DEET)
Nyangatjatjara College	Group Schools conference, Alice Springs
O'Loughlin College	Group Training NT
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) School Alice Springs	Human Resource Services Branch (DEET)
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) School Wadeye (Port Keats)	IAD / BIITE (Alice Springs)
Palmerston High School	Indigenous Education Division (DEET)
Papunya CEC	International Services Branch (DEET)
Pularumpi School	IT and Business Training Advisory Council
Ramingining CEC	IT Services Branch (DEET)
St John's College	Juvenile Diversionary Unit
St Phillip's College	Katherine Group School conference delegates
Sanderson High School	Leanyer Primary School Council representatives
Shepherdson College	Learning Lessons Implementation Steering Committee (LLISC)
Taminmin High School	Legal Services (DEET)
Tennant Creek High School	NIELNS Homeland Learning Centres conference delegates (Nhulunbuy)
Ti Tree School	Nightcliff Primary School past students (from 2002 Year 7 classes)
Willowra School	NT Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (NTAEGT)
Woolaning Homeland Christian College	NT Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NTCCI)
Wugularr School	NT Christian Schools Association
Yipirinya School	NT Council of Government School Organisations (NT COGSO) annual conference delegates
Yirara College	NT Treasury
Yirrkala CEC	Northern Suburbs Cluster – Principals
Yirrkala Homelands School	Palmerston youth
Yuendumu CEC	Professor Rod McDonald
Xavier College	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA)
	School of Education lecturers – Northern Territory University
	Schools Division (DEET)

SCHOOLS	GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS
	Strategic and Leadership Development Branch (DEET)
	Student Services Branch (DEET)
	Tangentyere Council
	The Hon. Clare Martin MLA – Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
	The Hon. Dr Peter Toyne MLA
	The Hon. Syd Stirling MLA
	The Hon. Terry Mills MLA
	Top End Group School teaching principals conference, Darwin
	University of the 3rd Age Casuarina
	Upper Primary School Teachers – Darwin
	Upper Primary School Teachers – Alice Springs
	Yunggorendi Higher Education and Research Centre – Flinders University

Analysis

The review team ensured that the processes put in place provided the best possible mechanisms for analysing the information collected from the consultations and submissions. The use of NUD*IST[28] allowed the team to develop a comprehensive index of the data to enable themes to be tracked across submissions and stay true to the original text. All of the team's consultation reports have been summarised collectively under a series of headings, for example "schools", "students", "pathways", and these summaries were published on the review website at www.edfuture.ntu.edu.au.

In addition, valuable contributions to the team's thinking were made by the project's Reference Group at a number of points during the project, and ultimately through their 'solutions paper' drawn together by the group's chair, Dr Brian Devlin. A copy of this paper, titled *Possible Solutions: a response to some problems that limit the range and effectiveness of secondary education in the Northern Territory*, was also published on the review website. The quantity and quality of the information that eventuated enabled the team to prepare the findings and recommendations with a high level of confidence.

In line with ethics agreements and confidentiality commitments to respondents to the review, the team made a deliberate decision that wherever individuals were quoted in the review report, they would not be identified. Where we did use quotes, unless otherwise stated, each

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[28] NUD*IST stands for 'Non-numeric, Unstructured, Data, Information Searching and Theorising' and is a software package specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. It is especially useful for large data sets, such as those generated by this project. NUD*IST provides a means of coding text into meaning categories, and then allows a research capacity to check the frequency of occurrence of various required items. In addition, it can generate sample data in the form of words – or quotes – from the processed text to enable illustrative samples to be cited in research reports.

quote was selected because it reflected general consensus on an issue or idea. The report also frequently uses phrases such as 'many respondents stated', 'a range of stakeholders believe' or 'there was general acknowledgement', to identify issues or themes on which there was agreement among the majority of respondents in consultations and submissions.

Although the review team saw many examples of high quality teaching and learning programs during its visits to schools across the Territory, due to time constraints, not all schools had the opportunity to share their good practice with team members during the consultations. Consequently, while we have occasionally referred to examples of good practice in the report, generally we have not identified the individual schools at which these were observed.

List of Submissions to the Review

Receipt No.	Name
R001	Regina Thompson
R002	Noel Land
R003	Jillian Finch
R004	Nigel and Lynda Hayes
R005	David Taylor
R006	Morag McGrath
R007	Judy Cotton
R008	Chris Brock
R009	Sally Winch
R010	Neil Lanceley
R011	George Hewitson
R012	Kate Young
R013	Paul Atkinson
R014	Phil Walcott
R015	Colleen Devlin
R016	Sanderson High School
R017	Samantha McCue
R018	Hallie Hodder
R019	Lianna Kairn
R020	Trevor Read
R021	Kendall Stirrat
R022	Natalie Tozer
R023	D.A. Peek Beng
R024	ANZAC Hill High
R025	Beverly O'Callaghan
R026	Mark Doecke - Principal
R027	Pam Nun
R028	Marie Randell
R029	CAESL
R030	Nyangatjatjara College -Yulara Campus
R030A	Nyangatjatjara College -Yulara Campus
R031	Janet Durling
R032	John Rattigan
R033	John Shanahan
R034	Rosemary Jacob
R035	Paula Thornton
R036	Christine Moran
R037	Jackie Wurm
R038	Kormilda College
R039	Janet Farnell
R040	Jenny Robins
R041	Casuarina Senior College
R042	Susan Luong-Van
R043	Chris Nagy
R044	Paul Erickson
R045	Lorna Hanssen
R046	Mathematics Faculty
R047	Donna Rousham
R048	Carmel O'Neill
R049	Fiona McLoughlin
R050	NTOEC
R051	Tarquin Millard
R052	Anthea and Vaclav Step
R053	Diwurruwurru-jaru Aboriginal Corporation
R054	Senior Years Team Curriculum Services Branch - DEET
R055	SSABSA Management
R056	Dr Ian Roberts
R057	Middle Years of Schooling Curriculum Services Branch - DEET
R058	Tamimmin High School
R058A	Tamimmin High School
R059	Joy Pederson
R060	Bill Palmer
R061	Kris Wellington
R062	Steve Fisher and Roberta Hall
R063	Curriculum Services Branch
R064	Students Services Branch
R065	Steve Rodgers
R066	Homelands Learning Centre
R067	Arnhem Cluster
R068	Evan Costello
R069	William Moir
R070	Name withheld
R071	St Philips College
R072	Oenpelli/Gunbalanya Education Group
R073	Maningrida Education Group
R074	Maningrida High School
R075	Gapuwiyak Education Group
R076	Yirrkala Education Group
R077	Name withheld
R078	Wugularr School
R079	Association of Independent Schools NT
R080	Employment and Training Division
R081	Catholic Education Office
R082	Name withheld
R083	Matt Brazier
R084	John Greatorex, Michael Christie
R085	Trevor Hayes
R086	Career Educators Association of the NT
R087	NT Chamber of Commerce and Industry
R088	Lesley Bannan
R089	Sharon Reeves
R090	Geoff Yeates
R091	Plaxy Purich
R092	Arts, Museums and Library Services
R093	Rev. Dean Whittaker
R094	Russell Totham
R095	NT Group Schools
R096	Australian Education Union
R097	Bentley James
R098	Damien Howard
R099	Debbie Thomas
R100	Emerging Leaders Program Leadership Network Project Team
R101	NT Youth Affairs Network
R102	Parent from NTEAGT
R103	Student Services
R104	Joy Pederson
R105	Doreen Rorrison
R106	Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians
R107	Learning Lessons Implementation Steering Committee
R108	Top End Group Schools
109	Skinny Fish Music
110	Indigenous Education Division
111	Central Land Council