



THE VOICE FOR NT PUBLIC EDUCATION

POLICY

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NT Public Education

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Policy 1: Rights to Education

Council affirms that every child and young person has an inherent right to a high-quality public education.

Council calls for the maintenance of a public education system that is fully funded at public expense.

Public education must be:

- 1.1 Fully publicly funded, free, compulsory and universal, with equitable access at all levels of public education.
- 1.2 Secular, inclusive and equitable, ensuring no student is disadvantaged by location, disability, culture, language, gender or circumstance.
- 1.3 Incorporate and value First Nations languages, cultures and worldviews, with particular recognition of the unique context of remote and very remote communities in the Northern Territory.
- 1.4 Delivered in environments that are emotionally and physically safe, supportive, and free from discrimination, racism, harassment, humiliation, degrading treatment, bullying, abuse, and violence.

Recognition Note

Council recognises that in the Northern Territory there are over 100 Aboriginal languages and dialects, alongside Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

While this policy currently uses the wording “*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, cultures and worldviews*”, Council acknowledges that terminology may change over time in line with advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Elders and representative organisations.

The intent of this policy remains the same: to ensure that public education respects and incorporates the languages, cultures and worldviews of First Nations peoples.

Policy 2: Purpose of Education

Council affirms that the purpose of public education is to:

- 2.1 Develop the full potential of every student in intellectual, cultural, social, emotional and physical domains
- 2.2 Prepare students for active participation in society, with the skills to advance democracy and help shape a more inclusive future
- 2.3 Foster curiosity, creativity, cultural understanding and critical thinking, equipping students for lifelong learning
- 2.4 Equip students with the knowledge, skills and values to thrive as learners, pursue diverse pathways and contribute positively in a changing world

Policy 3: Choice of Education

- 3.1 Council affirms that there should be no zoning of schools and that parents should, so far as is practicable, be allowed to choose which school their children attend.
- 3.2 Council affirms that the Government should encourage diversity of educational methods and programs both between and within schools so as to provide parents and students with as wide a choice as possible.
- 3.3 Council affirms that the Government must make additional resources including staff available to schools in small towns and remote communities so as to provide as wide an educational experience for students in those areas as is available in larger communities.

Policy 4: Parents, Students, and Community

4.1 Parents

- 4.1.1 Parents must be recognised as the first and continuing educators of their children, and essential partners in supporting their child's wellbeing and education.
- 4.1.2 Parents have a right to be involved individually and collectively in decisions that affect their child's wellbeing and education, and governments must support this right.
- 4.1.3 Parents have the right to be provided with frequent, clear and accessible information on their child's progress, strengths, challenges and supports, and clear information about the school.
- 4.1.4 Parents must be supported to actively participate in the school community.
- 4.1.5 Parents have the right to be supported and resourced to actively participate in decisions that affect their child's wellbeing and education.
- 4.1.6 Parents have the right to access principals, teachers and professionals involved in their child's learning and wellbeing.
- 4.1.7 Parents have the right to clear information on avenues of support or resolution when matters cannot be addressed at the school level.

4.2 Students

- 4.2.1 Students have the right to a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment.
- 4.2.2 Students have the right to education that meets their individual needs, values their culture, identity and background, and supports them to reach their full potential.
- 4.2.3 Students have the right to fair and transparent assessment of their abilities and progress, for the information of the student, their parents and teachers.
- 4.2.4 Students have the right to have their assessment results kept private and not used externally without their consent.
- 4.2.5 Students have the right to access guidance and information on course options, their outcomes and implications, to make informed decisions about their learning pathways.
- 4.2.6 Students have the right to be informed of their legal rights in education, including privacy of their records and assessments, protection from discrimination, and the right to a safe learning environment.

- 4.2.7 Students have the right to be informed of their legal responsibilities in education, including compulsory attendance requirements, compliance with lawful instructions from staff, and behaving in ways that do not harm others.
- 4.2.8 Students have the right to age-appropriate opportunities to participate in decision-making within the school.
- 4.2.9 Students have the right to clear information on avenues of support or resolution when matters cannot be addressed at the school level.

Student Responsibilities

- 4.2.10 Students are responsible, as they mature, for making genuine effort in their learning.
- 4.2.11 Students are responsible for treating other members of the school community property and resources with respect.
- 4.2.12 Students are responsible for contributing to a safe and positive learning environment.

4.3 Parent and Community Involvement in Government Schools

- 4.3.1 Council affirms that thriving school communities are those where:
 - principals and staff work genuinely with the community in educational decision making learning environments are safe, inclusive and supportive
 - schools and communities prioritise student wellbeing for learning
 - schools and communities create environments that support and encourage healthy choices by students
 - schools and communities work with families and services to support the wellbeing of students and their communities
 - resources and facilities are adequate and used effectively and efficiently

Legislative requirements and governance accountabilities

- 4.3.2 Council affirms that parents and communities have a legislative responsibility for governance decision making in schools through School Representative Bodies.
- 4.3.3 Principals are required to take reasonable steps each year to ensure a School Representative Body is established, recognising the importance of parents and communities in governance.

- 4.3.4 Where it is not reasonably practicable for a School Representative Body to be established, a Parent Consultative Group must be formed to maintain parent and community involvement.
- 4.3.5 School Representative Bodies are accountable to their local communities for the achievement of educational outcomes for children and young people.

Leadership recruitment responsibilities

- 4.3.6 The Chair of the School Representative Body, or their nominee, must be represented on panels for the recruitment of principals.
- 4.3.7 The Chair of the School Representative Body, or their nominee, must be represented on panels for the recruitment of APs.
- 4.3.8 For very remote schools, each selection panel must include a minimum of two First Nations School Representative Body members, nominated by the parent members.

4.4 Representation

- 4.4.1 Council believes that sitting fees should be paid to parent representatives called to sit on Education Department Committees, Ministerial/Education Department working parties and statutory bodies with paid departmental representatives.

4.5 Student Representation

- 4.5.1 Council believes that the public education system serves to guide students to explore all facets of decision making so that in future they may contribute and participate in the life of the community.
- 4.5.2 Council believes therefore that student representatives must be given the opportunity to take part in formal decision making at all levels of the education system.
- 4.5.3 Council believes that the formal decision-making process in which student representatives take part should model the democratic process.
- 4.5.4 Council believes that at secondary education level, the student body should be given administrative and moral support to facilitate their participation in school-based decision making.
- 4.5.5 Council believes that primary schools should encourage students from their earliest years at school to progressively become involved in decision making.
- 4.5.6 Council believes that primary school representative bodies should develop strategies for taking account of the interests and views of their student body.

Policy 5: First Nations Education and Cultural Safety

Council affirms the following policy positions on First Nations education and cultural safety in the Northern Territory, with the aim of ensuring a culturally safe and inclusive educational environment for all First Nations students.

5.1 Connection to Country

A student's cultural identity and connection to Country must be supported and respected, with First Nations ways of learning recognised as holistic, relational, experiential, and reflective.

5.2 Learning on Country

Learning on Country programs which embed local ecological, cultural and spiritual knowledge, must be central to education in the Northern Territory and prioritised to support First Nations students' identity and self-esteem.

5.3 Bilingual Education

Bilingual and multilingual education, including instruction through students' home languages alongside English, is an essential right of First Nations students and must be sustained and fully funded.

5.4 Educators

The role of Elders, knowledge holders, and First Nations staff as mentors, role models, translators, and cultural educators must be formally recognised and supported. These individuals are essential educators within schools for their teachings of culture, language, and history.

5.5 Community co-design

Policies, curricula, and governance must be co-designed with First Nations communities, families, First Nations staff, Elders, and community organisations to reflect local voices and cultural authority. Delivery and implementation must occur in genuine partnership and be led by First Nations communities.

5.6 Induction

All teachers and leaders must receive training in cultural competency, including local history, language groups, kinship systems and protocols, developed and delivered with First Nations communities.

5.7 Safe Spaces

Practices that affirm and safeguard students' cultural identities must be embedded, and all learning environments must be safe and respectful places for cultural expression.

5.8 Truth-Telling in Australian History

All students must learn an honest account of Australia's history from a First Nations perspective, including colonisation, dispossession, endurance, resilience, and survival, as a foundation for truth-telling and respect.

5.9 Embedding First Nations Knowledges

First Nations knowledges, perspectives and ways of knowing, being and doing must be embedded across all learning areas.

5.10 Respect for Sacred Knowledge

Sacred knowledge must be recognised and respected with the observance of cultural protocols in all learning environments.

5.11 Holistic and Relational Learning

Learning must be holistic, relational, reflective, and experiential, extending beyond academic achievement to include cultural, spiritual, emotional, and social development.

5.12 Future Custodianship and Responsibility

Students' roles as future custodians of culture, Country and community must be recognised and respected in all educational practices.

5.13 Storytelling in learning

Storytelling must be embedded as pedagogy, with stories, memory, and oral traditions as essential practices fully integrated into the formal curriculum.

5.14 Respect and reciprocity

These principles must be upheld across all relationships, including self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors, recognising the interconnected nature of learning and life.

Country refers to the lands, waterways and seas to which First Nations peoples are connected. It encompasses law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, family and identity.

Policy 6: Funding of Education

6.1 Free, Compulsory, Universal and Secular

Council affirms that public education must be free, compulsory, universal, secular and fully government funded.

6.2 No Compulsory Fees

Council opposes compulsory school fees. Every student must have free access to instruction, items, activities and services required for full participation in the curriculum. No student should be disadvantaged if parents are unwilling or unable to pay fees.

6.3 Needs-Based Resourcing

Funding must be needs-based, with equity loadings that take account of Indigeneity, disability, socio-economic, geographic rural/remote, and English as an Additional Language and Dialect disadvantage.

6.4 Voluntary Contributions

Parent contributions must be voluntary and not conditional. Any amount and payment of voluntary contributions is at the discretion of parents and carers, and must be free from coercion. Schools must communicate clearly that contributions are optional. Non-payment must not affect a student's enrolment, participation, or ability to meet curriculum requirements.

6.5 Infrastructure Responsibility

Responsibility for funding school infrastructure must rest with governments. School facilities should be fully funded from public expenditure, and not rely on parent or community fundraising, sponsorship, or voluntary contributions.

6.6 Legislated Management by School Representative Bodies

Management of school funding is a legislated function of school representative bodies, who determine the purposes for which money allocated by the Department is to be expended and expend that money. Council affirms that this responsibility must be supported by clear delegations, strong financial controls, transparent reporting by the Department, and ongoing training to build financial literacy and effective oversight.

6.7 Funding Non-Government Schools

Government funding to non-government schools must be fully transparent, accountable and must not come at the expense of public education. Funding must not entrench inequity created by selective enrolment practices or socio-economic advantage.

Policy 7: Inclusive Education and Equity

7.1 Inclusive Education Principles

Schools must embrace the diversity of every student, ensuring no learner is excluded because of their background, identity or needs.

Every student has the right to participate fully in education, with their diversity recognised as a strength. Schools must welcome and include students of all abilities, cultures, languages, identities and circumstances, removing barriers to participation and learning.

Students with disability, those experiencing disadvantage, students living in remote and very remote communities, young carers, pregnant or parenting students, students in care, students in detention or under youth justice orders, and those experiencing poverty, homelessness, trauma or refugee settlement must all be supported to thrive in school.

Inclusion requires that schools adapt teaching, curriculum, environments and resources so that every student learns alongside their peers, with families recognised as partners in defining and supporting inclusive practice.

7.2 Safe and supportive environments

Schools must provide safe and supportive environments where diversity is respected and every student is free from harm and discrimination.

Full policy:

All students are entitled to physically, culturally, emotionally and psychosocially safe learning environments that are respectful and supportive. Diversity must be embraced and celebrated, and schools must ensure freedom from discrimination, racism, harassment, humiliation, degrading treatment, bullying, abuse, and violence.

7.3 Individualised learning pathways

Individualised and flexible learning pathways must be co-designed with families and educators, with clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal.

Full policy:

Every student must have access to individualised and flexible learning pathways that are developed in partnership with students, families and educators to support learning, wellbeing and successful transitions across schooling and into further education or training. Families must be recognised as partners in decision making, with clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal.

7.4 Family and student voice

Families and students must be genuine partners in decisions, with culturally safe consultation and clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal.

Full policy:

Schools must actively foster respectful and inclusive partnerships with families and students in educational decision making.

Families must have clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal decisions about educational provision, adjustments, supports and resourcing, through processes that are transparent and culturally and psychologically safe.

Schools must actively foster respectful and inclusive partnerships with families and students in educational decision making.

Families and students must have rights that are clearly and appropriately communicated so they can contribute, question, review or appeal decisions through processes that are transparent, respectful and psychologically safe.

Families and students have the right to participate fully and speak up without fear of reprisal in decisions about educational provision, removal from school, staffing, adjustments, supports and resourcing.

7.5 Equity of access for remote and very remote students

Remote and very remote students must have the same opportunities as urban students, supported by staffing, connectivity, distance education, transport and boarding, with guaranteed access to quality secondary schooling.

Full policy:

Students in remote and very remote communities are entitled to the same educational opportunities as those in urban areas. This requires equitable digital connectivity, technology and learning resources, sufficient local staffing with incentives to attract and retain teachers and support staff, distance education support, reliable transport options, and adequate boarding. Equity in the provision of secondary schooling in remote and very remote communities must be guaranteed so that every student can access quality secondary education close to home or through supported pathways.

Government is responsible for ensuring that safe, free, physically accessible and culturally responsive boarding facilities are available to support students to thrive. No student should be required to leave the Northern Territory to access secondary education because of a lack of local provision.

7.6 Reasonable adjustments

Students with disability must have early identification, reasonable adjustments and individual learning plans, consistent with the national Disability Standards for Education and broader national disability strategies, with families as full partners with clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal.

Full policy:

Students with disability must be welcomed and supported in their local school, with the resources, trained staff and specialist services needed for them to participate fully in every

aspect of school life and learning on the same basis as their peers. This requires early identification and timely intervention, the provision of reasonable adjustments and the development of individual learning plans, with delivery consistent with the national Disability Standards for Education and broader national disability strategies. Families of students with disability must be recognised as partners in planning and decision making about supports and adjustments, with clear rights to contribute, question, review or appeal of decisions.

7.7 Inclusive teaching practices

Teaching must be inclusive, flexible and culturally responsive, with all staff supported through ongoing professional learning.

Full policy:

Schools must adopt inclusive teaching and learning practices, grounded in Universal Design for Learning, differentiated teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Curriculum must be flexible and adaptable to reflect student diversity, and educators and support staff must be provided with ongoing professional learning in inclusive practices and cultural responsiveness.

7.8 Early identification and intervention

Students with diverse learning needs must have early identification, timely assessment and rapid access to specialist staff and services.

Full policy:

All students with diverse learning needs must have access to early identification and timely intervention. This requires regular screening, accessible and timely assessments, and immediate access to specialist staff, allied health professionals and support services to ensure barriers to learning are addressed as early as possible.

7.9 Accessible facilities and resources

Schools must have safe, inclusive and well maintained facilities, equitable digital access and assistive technologies to enable full participation.

Full policy:

Schools must provide accessible facilities, resources and technologies so that all students can fully participate in school life and learning. This includes safe and inclusive built environments, equitable digital connectivity, technology and learning resources for regional and remote communities, and specialised or assistive technologies, equipment and materials for students with disability and diverse learning needs. Facilities and environments must be well designed, adequately maintained and conducive to learning.

7.10 Educator preparation and professional learning

Teachers, including Aboriginal teachers, and support staff must be equipped through pre service and ongoing professional learning in inclusion, with adequate resourcing, incentives and access to specialist staff.

Full policy:

Teachers, including Aboriginal teachers, and support staff must be supported through pre service preparation and ongoing professional learning in inclusive education, cultural responsiveness, trauma informed practice and the requirements of the national Disability Standards for Education. Training must be embedded, adequately resourced, and supported by incentives to ensure all staff undertake and maintain professional learning. Specialist teachers and support staff must be available in sufficient numbers to meet student needs, and staffing strategies must ensure that schools are equipped to support inclusion in every classroom.

7.11 Accountability and continuous improvement

Schools must be accountable for inclusive practices, with families empowered to raise concerns and contribute to improvements.

Full policy:

Inclusive education requires ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement to ensure that all students are genuinely welcomed, supported and able to succeed. Schools must demonstrate accountability for implementing inclusive practices through transparent processes, reporting and review.

Families must be empowered with clear rights to contribute feedback, raise concerns, question decisions and seek review or appeal where inclusion is not upheld. Policy, practice and resources must be regularly evaluated and adapted in consultation with families, students and communities to ensure continuous improvement in inclusive education across all schools.

7.12 Re-engagement pathways

Students who leave school early must have accessible opportunities to re-engage in education or training.

Students who leave school early must have accessible opportunities to re-engage in education, training or alternative learning pathways. Schools and systems must support flexible re-entry and transition programs so that early school leavers can continue their learning and attainment in ways that meet their needs and circumstances.

7.13 Pregnant and parenting students

Pregnant and parenting students must be supported to continue their education in a nurturing environment.

Pregnant and parenting students must be supported to continue their education in a nurturing environment, with the right to choose a school where they feel safe, valued and

included. Schools must provide adjustments, flexible learning and wellbeing supports to ensure these students can participate fully.

7.14 Students in care and youth justice

Students in care and youth justice must not be educationally disadvantaged by their circumstances.

Children and young people in out-of-home care must have uninterrupted access to education, with clear responsibility on government agencies and schools to maintain enrolment and continuity of learning when placements change. Young people in youth justice facilities must have access to qualified teachers, curriculum and resources that are equivalent to their peers in mainstream schools, ensuring that detention does not limit their right to education or future pathways.

7.15 Gifted and talented learners

Gifted and talented learners must be recognised and provided with pathways to achieve their potential.

Gifted and talented learners must be recognised as part of student diversity. Schools must provide identification, enrichment, extension and personalised pathways that enable these students to achieve their full potential.

Policy 8: Student Wellbeing

8.1 Policy Statement

Every student has the right to learn in an environment that supports their safety, wellbeing and positive development. School leaders and staff, families and communities share responsibility for creating conditions that enable students to thrive.

8.2 Student Wellbeing Policy Commitments

Council Affirms:

- 8.2.1 Wellbeing must be integral to learning and achievement and embedded across the Australian Curriculum and school culture.
- 8.2.2 School leaders and staff must adopt inclusive and trauma-informed practices so all students are safe, trusted and respected.
- 8.2.3 School leaders and staff must provide programs and practices that develop students' resilience, social and emotional skills, self-regulation and positive relationships, in partnership with families.
- 8.2.4 Mental health promotion, early intervention and access to appropriate professional support must be provided in every school community.
- 8.2.5 Wellbeing initiatives must be equitable, with additional and targeted supports for students facing disadvantage.
- 8.2.6 Schools and communities must form genuine partnerships with families, health and community services to provide holistic support.
- 8.2.7 Wellbeing approaches must be monitored, reviewed and improved in response to student, family and community feedback.

8.3 Wellbeing Expectations

- 8.3.1 Students and families must experience learning environments that are physically, culturally, emotionally and psychosocially safe, respectful and supportive, free from discrimination, racism, harassment, humiliation, degrading treatment, bullying, abuse and violence.
- 8.3.2 Students must experience consistent encouragement and care for their wellbeing and positive development from school leaders, staff and the wider school community.
- 8.3.3 Families must see school leaders and staff actively promoting environments that support wellbeing and positive relationships.

- 8.3.4 Families must experience genuine partnership, where their voices are valued and their role respected in all decisions concerning their child's wellbeing, learning, supports and services.

8.4 School-Based Mental Health Service Policy

Council acknowledges that mental health disorders adversely affect the emotional wellbeing, social functioning and academic achievement of students.

Council believes the Northern Territory government is responsible for providing a school mental health service with mental health practitioners to support young people with mild to moderate and emerging mental health concerns.

The position of Council is that mental health practitioners must be permanently based in individual schools to provide an early intervention mental health service.

School-based mental health practitioners build strong relationships with students, parents, and staff, fostering trust and understanding. Being present within their school community enables mental health practitioners to proactively address students' mental health needs, identify early warning signs, and provide timely interventions.

Council believes there should be no requirement for a student to complete their mental health request in a form, application or referral to the agency prior to accessing a school mental health service.

Council recognises that schools are the ideal platform for promoting good mental health, responding to students with mild to moderate and developing mental health concerns, and supporting referrals where necessary to a mental health service.

8.4.1 School mental health practitioners

Council believes practitioners working in a school mental health service must have a background in psychology, social work or occupational therapy. Practitioners include:

- Psychologists
- Counsellors*
- Social Workers
- Occupational Therapists
- Nurses with a mental health specialisation.

*Counsellors must have completed a Bachelor of Counselling or a Master of Counselling and be a practising/fully qualified member of either the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) or the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA).

Practitioners must be eligible for appropriate registration or membership with the relevant authority.

8.4.2 Role of school mental health practitioners

Council believes the service must be designed to support young people who may be experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems and intervene early in the development of more serious mental health concerns. The services they provide should include:

- assessing student mental health needs and concerns
- supporting students to develop strategies to manage distress and maintain their mental health.
- contributing to referral and case management processes for students with more complex mental health presentations.
- supporting referrals and linking to external support services as required
- developing the mental health literacy of the school community.

Council supports practitioners to work collaboratively with students and families, education staff, other support service providers and external agencies to support young people to improve their psychological health and emotional wellbeing.

8.4.3 Access and Equity

Council believes schools should receive a school based mental health service practitioner either full time or part time, based on the number of students enrolled at the school.

The Council recognises the guidelines set by the Australian Psychological Society (APS), which recommend a ratio of one psychologist to 500 students. However, given the unique context of the Northern Territory, we support the following ratios to ensure practitioners can effectively meet the needs of students and provide them with the necessary support.

- Schools with less than 100 students should have at least one part-time practitioner assigned.
- Schools with less than 500 students should have at least one full-time practitioner assigned.
- Schools with 500 or more students should have at least two full-time practitioners assigned.

Council supports the provision of alternative support services for remote schools where having dedicated mental health practitioners may not be feasible due to geographical challenges. These may include, but must not be limited to, access to telephone and online counselling services. The alternative support services must only be provided following community approval through local decision making.

Council recognises there can be wait lists and funding challenges for students who need diagnosis and intensive clinical treatment. While a school mental health service will not resolve this issue, early intervention may prevent the need for a more intensive service for some students.

8.4.4 Role of student wellbeing leaders and other support staff

Council believes schools should continue to have student wellbeing leaders, student support services and other health and wellbeing roles as part of a whole-of-school support structure. A school based mental health service must be an additional service.

8.4.5 Support and Training for Wellbeing Teams

Council advocates for training in trauma-informed practices and mental health first aid for all members of school wellbeing teams. This will enhance their ability to support students' mental health and foster a positive culture of wellbeing within schools.

Policy 9: Health

- 9.0.1 Council affirms that no child's educational progress should be impeded through lack of proper health care.
- 9.0.2 Council affirms that comprehensive health screening of students, particularly vision and hearing testing, should take place every two years throughout the primary years of schooling.
- 9.0.3 Council affirms that the Health and Education Departments should co-operate to develop community health services to provide preventative and corrective health care for all children. To this end, they should provide services to schools by community health nurses, dentists and dental therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and other specialist staff as necessary.
- 9.0.4 Council affirms that staff in all schools hold a current and maintain First Aid Certificate and any necessary expenses should be met by the Department of Education.
- 9.0.5 Council affirms schools have a role to play in encouraging moderation in the use of alcohol and can demonstrate this by ensuring some school functions are alcohol-free.

9.1 School-Based Health Promoting Nurses

Council recognises the critical role of school-based nurses in promoting the health and wellbeing of students. School-based nurses play a vital part in providing preventive care, health education, and immediate medical support to ensure the overall health and safety of students within the school setting.

Council believes government should maintain an evidence-based health promotion model that constantly strengthens its capacity to support healthy living and learning. In addition, government should ensure an evidence-based health application to capture, analyse, process and act on data generated.

The position of Council is for every student to have access to a school nurse.

The position of Council is that school nurses are permanently based and maintained within an individual school. School-based nurses have the advantage of building trusting relationships with students, parents, and staff, enabling them to address health concerns and promote healthy behaviours effectively. They provide support in managing chronic conditions, administering medication, responding to emergencies, and promoting general health and wellbeing.

School-based nurses should collaborate with other health providers and educators to ensure a coordinated approach.

Council supports the provision of alternative support services for remote schools where having a dedicated school-based nurse may not be feasible due to geographical challenges. These may include, but must not be limited to, regular visits from healthcare professionals, telehealth services, and access to community health clinics to ensure that students in remote

areas receive appropriate healthcare support. The alternative support services must only be provided following community approval through local decision making.

Council believes every Northern Territory school must be a health promoting school, one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.

A health promoting school:

- Fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal.
- Engages health and education officials, teachers, teachers' unions, students, parents, health providers and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place.
- Strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education, and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programs for staff, nutrition and food safety programs, opportunities for physical education and recreation, and programs for counselling, social support and mental health promotion.
- Implements policies and practices that respect an individual's wellbeing and dignity, provide multiple opportunities for success, and acknowledge good efforts and intentions as well as personal achievements.
- Strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members as well as students; and works with community leaders to help them understand how the community contributes to, or undermines, health and education.

9.2 Drug Education

- 9.2.1 Council affirms the goal of drug education in schools should be consistent with the definition of harm minimisation in the national Drug Strategy which accepts that interventions will reduce the risk of harm associated with drug use without necessarily eliminating it.
- 9.2.2 Council affirms drug education is best taught in the context of the school health Curriculum.
- 9.2.3 Council affirms drug education should commence in the primary years, be sequenced over time and be supported by relevant policies.
- 9.2.4 Council affirms drug education programs need to be based on research, effective curriculum practice and identified student needs.
- 9.2.5 Council affirms drug education should be comprehensive and reflect an understanding of the characteristics of the individual, the social context, the drug and the interrelationship of these factors.

- 9.2.6 Council affirms a comprehensive drug education program, embracing harm minimisation strategies, should also address interventions, including counselling services and referral procedures.
- 9.2.7 Council affirms a clear statement of what a drug education program is expected to achieve is critical.

Policy 10: School-Based Police Officer Program

Policy

Council acknowledges the importance of a School-Based Police Officer Program based on the principles of relationship-building, education and community engagement.

Council holds the fundamental belief that children always have a right to physical and psychological safety, and that individuals, parents, communities, police and governments, must play a part in protecting and guiding children.

Council strongly believes that a School-Based Police Officer Program is an essential component of a safe and positive learning environment for students. The program must be based on proactive and preventative policing through the building of relationships, rather than punitive measures.

Objectives:

- An innovative and understood partnership between police and schools which assists every student to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally and academically;
- Safe and supportive learning environments;
- Establishing strong and positive relationships between police, students, families, schools and school communities;
- Improving young people's understanding of community and safety issues;
- Reducing antisocial and criminal behaviour patterns in students; and
- Develop positive attitudes in students and families toward police and the school.

Council believes that to ensure schools have adequate support and coverage, the number of School-Based Police Officers assigned to each school should be proportionate to the number of students enrolled. To achieve this, Council recommends using a ratio formula to ensure that schools of all sizes receive appropriate support from School-Based Police Officers:

- Schools with less than 100 students should have at least one part-time officer assigned.
- Schools with less than 500 students should have at least one full-time officer assigned.
- Schools with 500 or more students should have at least two full-time officers assigned.

A School-Based Police Officer Program must require the Department of Education and NT Police to work collaboratively to deliver programs, activities and services in NT Government schools.

Council expects the Department of Education and NT Police to maintain a School-Based Police Officer Program through the following policy requirements:

- A School-Based Police Officer Program must be delivered in all Northern Territory government middle and senior schools. This requires the Police Officer/s to be based at their allocated school.
- A School-Based Police Officer Program should be available for primary schools where appropriate, however, Police Officer's in middle or senior schools should not be required to service primary schools also. Additional police resourcing should be made available. This may include Police Auxiliaries in primary school settings.
- A School-Based Police Officer role must be to:
 - build positive relationships with young people;
 - deliver education programs which help young people make good decisions on their health, safety, wellbeing and resilience and;
 - develop relationships with community groups, non-government and government agencies to support services for young people who are in need or at risk.
- Police must contact a student's parent or guardian prior to conducting enquiries where a student is:
 - a victim;
 - a witness; or
 - suspected of being involved in an offence.
- The role of School-Based Police Officers does not include arresting young people on school grounds except where arrest is an option of last resort.
- Students will not be formally interviewed by police within school grounds except in the case of an emergency or where there are exceptional circumstances.
- Where an emergency or exceptional circumstance necessitates a formal police interview, Principals must provide a safe and private space to conduct the interview, and police must organise a support person for the student.
- Principals must provide a private space for police to carry out a search of a student, their clothing, and immediate personal belongings.
- Students may request a family member, departmental or other school staff as support persons.

Council believes that a School-Based Police Program is a valuable resource for schools and students in the Northern Territory, and any reduction or absence of this program has a significant impact on the relationships and trust built between students and police.

Footnote: "Auxiliary" refers to something or someone that provides additional support or help.

Policy 11: Infrastructure and Facilities

Policy Statement

- 11.0.1 Council affirms that safe, inclusive, well-designed and properly maintained school infrastructure and facilities are essential to delivering high-quality public education.
- 11.0.2 Governments must design and maintain schools, as long-term public assets, that can adapt to changing student needs, community expectations and educational practices.
- 11.0.3 School facilities must support student and school community wellbeing, safety and high-quality teaching and learning in both indoor and outdoor settings.

11.1 Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

- 11.1.1 Every student is entitled to safe, inclusive and accessible school facilities that support their learning needs, wellbeing and full participation.
- 11.1.2 Facilities must be designed to guarantee full participation of all students, inclusive of their physical, medical, sensory, neurodivergent, social and cultural circumstances.
- 11.1.3 Facilities must be planned and constructed in line with universal design principles to ensure barrier-free access and usability for students, families and staff.
- 11.1.4 Facilities must be designed to reflect and celebrate diversity and provide safe and welcoming environments for students of all cultural backgrounds, genders and sexualities, their families and communities.
- 11.1.5 Toilets, change rooms and hygiene facilities must be planned and maintained to uphold privacy, dignity and safety for all students, with inclusive options that meet cultural and gender needs, and provide appropriate menstrual hygiene management.
- 11.1.6 Facility design must incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles, minimising opportunities for bullying and unsafe behaviour, with secure and supervised entry points.
- 11.1.7 Buildings and grounds must comply with health and safety standards, with routine audits, transparent reporting, and the identification and removal of asbestos, mould and other hazards.

11.2 Planning, Design and Community Engagement

- 11.2.1 Governments must not approve major school construction or refurbishment without an up-to-date master plan, based on projected enrolments, local context and genuine consultation.

- 11.2.2 Governments must engage school representative bodies and communities in genuine partnership from project inception, with input into concept, design and delivery.
- 11.2.3 Facilities must be designed to function as community hubs, allowing safe after- hours access where appropriate, while protecting student learning and resources.
- 11.2.4 Governments must design and deliver school facilities with capacity for enrolment growth through planned expansion, avoiding reliance on demountables as long- term solutions.

11.3 Functionality and Flexibility

- 11.3.1 Infrastructure must be learner-centred, with spaces that are practical, versatile and designed to meet student needs.
- 11.3.2 Facilities must support interdisciplinary and project-based learning, with flexible layouts, multipurpose spaces, and opportunities for students to exercise agency in their learning environments.
- 11.3.3 Indoor and outdoor spaces must be connected through a coherent layout, with circulation spaces designed to support safe and equitable student movement.
- 11.3.4 Governments must design and maintain learning spaces that comply with relevant Australian Standards for acoustics and lighting.

11.4 Outdoor Environments

- 11.4.1 Students must have access to safe, shaded, sheltered and inclusive outdoor learning and recreation spaces that support play, cultural activities, wellbeing and environmental learning.
- 11.4.2 Outdoor environments must enable passive supervision, encourage creativity and discovery, and support student wellbeing across all age groups.
- 11.4.3 Site planning must provide safe access and exit points, with well-designed pick-up and drop-off zones, pedestrian crossings, and end-of-trip facilities for active travel (bikes/scooters), with universal wayfinding.

11.5 Air Quality

- 11.5.1 School facilities must be designed, constructed and maintained to guarantee healthy indoor air quality that protects the wellbeing, cognitive performance and safety of students, staff and families.
- 11.5.2 Governments must set and enforce air quality standards that meet or exceed national health and safety benchmarks for ventilation, filtration and pollutant control; prioritise natural ventilation and passive cooling in design; and require all systems to be fitted

with filters and components appropriate to NT conditions, maintained on a regular schedule.

- 11.5.3 Governments must provide every school with air quality monitoring and recording systems that continuously track CO₂, humidity, dust, mould and particulate levels, provide real-time feedback, and enable annual transparent reporting by governments to school bodies and the wider community.
- 11.5.4 Best practice design must incorporate passive cooling and shading, low-emission building materials, and strategies for smoke and pollution events, assisting schools to remain open safely during seasonal or climate-related risks.
- 11.5.5 Governments must provide dedicated funding for the monitoring, maintenance and replacement of air quality systems to guarantee equitable provision across all schools.
- 11.5.6 Outdoor learning and recreation spaces must be monitored and managed for safe air quality during smoke, dust and pollution events, with contingency plans to protect student health and wellbeing.

11.6 Resilience and Emergency Preparedness

- 11.6.1 School facilities must be designed and maintained for climate resilience, with cyclone-appropriate construction and protection from heat, humidity, storms and smoke.
- 11.6.2 Emergency preparedness must be supported by safe shelter areas, reliable communications, backup power for critical systems, and infrastructure that supports safe and effective lockdowns when required.
- 11.6.3 Governments must guarantee uninterrupted access to safe drinking water and sanitation in all schools, with contingency measures during climate events and infrastructure failures.

11.7 Sustainability

- 11.7.1 Governments must design and operate school infrastructure to minimise its whole-of-life environmental impact, incorporating renewable energy, natural cooling, durable materials and water efficiency.
- 11.7.2 All infrastructure projects must adopt whole-of-life costing approaches, prioritising long-term value and avoiding upgrades that provide little educational or environmental benefit.
- 11.7.3 School infrastructure must model sustainable practices and provide students with opportunities to engage with them in their learning.

11.8 Maintenance and Asset Management

- 11.8.1 Governments must provide adequate recurrent funding for timely maintenance, renewal and upgrades of all schools, with transparent, publicly available condition audits.
- 11.8.2 Governments must provide additional funding to remote schools to cover higher costs of upkeep and operation caused by transport, environmental conditions and contractor access, so that all students have equitable access to quality facilities.
- 11.8.3 Governments must fully fund unavoidable infrastructure-related costs and essential services increases to safeguard school budgets and maintain high-quality teaching and learning.
- 11.8.4 Governments must publish a rolling capital works program and annual school-by-school condition audit summaries, including progress on defect rectification and maintenance backlogs.

11.9 Digital and Technological Infrastructure

- 11.9.1 Students must have equitable access to high-speed, reliable digital connectivity and technology-enabled learning spaces as a core part of school infrastructure.
- 11.9.2 Governments must prioritise investment to close the digital gap for rural, remote and very remote students.
- 11.9.3 Online platforms, learning technologies and digital systems must be accessible to every student, with design that enables full participation of students with disability and neurodivergent learners.
- 11.9.4 Critical digital services must have school-wide coverage and reliable power supply, including back-up capacity, to maintain teaching and safety operations.

11.10 Libraries

- 11.10.1 Students are entitled to access a modern library that functions as a flexible, multi-purpose learning hub, central to literacy, learning and creativity.
- 11.10.2 Libraries must provide bilingual and multilingual resources, balance print and digital access/e-resources, offer adaptable spaces for learning, and act as places to showcase student work, cultural identity and community values.
- 11.10.3 Libraries must be staffed by qualified personnel to deliver expertise in literacy, information management and digital fluency.
- 11.10.4 In remote settings, libraries may also serve as community resources, ensuring families have access to learning and cultural materials.

11.11 School Openings and Closures

- 11.11.1 Interim school bodies must be legislatively established and resourced for all new schools, to oversee planning and ensure strong community voice.
- 11.11.2 Governments must not close any school without at least 12 months of transparent consultation, an independent educational and community impact assessment, and retention of public assets solely for public education.

11.12 New Schools

- 11.12.1 Council affirms that part of the initial process of planning a new school should be the formation of an interim school representative body to facilitate through consultation with the entire school community during all stages of the school development:
 - a) site planning
 - b) planning principal, and principal
 - c) school curriculum
 - d) financial negotiation and management
 - e) design of facilities and management
 - f) timing of a new school opening.
- 11.12.2 Council affirms that interim school representative bodies should be legislated for, enabling them to actively take part in all stages of negotiation, design, maintenance and implementation of the new school.

11.13 School Closures

- 11.13.1 Council affirms the neighbourhood school is an essential feature of a Public Education system which provides structural support to:
 - a) the commitment to a public education system which ensures that all children have access to a high quality education enabling a successful and constructive schooling for all;
 - b) the development of a sense of shared purpose between the school and its community;
 - c) the participation of parents in the educational process which takes place in schools; and
 - d) ensuring safe access of students to schools.
- 11.13.2 Council affirms:
 - a) it is a fundamental obligation of Government to provide Government schools when and where they are needed, and keep them open for as long as they are needed;
 - b) opposes school closures except in circumstances where changes in land use and residential population result in the loss of a link between the school and its local community;
 - c) affirms there can be no across-the-board criteria for school closures;
 - d) affirms that where school closures are mooted:

- there should be full, proper, open and public consultation with the school communities affected namely the school proposed for closure and the school or schools likely to receive displaced students as well as peak parent and teacher organisations and other community groups over a minimum period of twelve months.
- If a decision is made to close a school at least 12 months notice should then be given of the proposed closure, with closure being effected only on completion of the school year.
- A fact-finding working party comprising the Department's Deputy Secretary (School Policy), demographer and appropriate Superintendent, a representative of each of the NT COGSO and the NT Teachers Federation, and from each school affected by the closure a parent representative of the school representative body and the principal should be established to inquire into the proposed school closure and undertake an impact study which takes into account:
 - (i) educational, social, economic, cultural, environmental, urban planning, community and historical factors
 - (ii) school population including future enrolment projections
 - (iii) geographical and safety factors
 - (iv) the availability of outside school hours care
 - (v) access to, and accommodation for, students at the nearest government school
 - (vi) impact on the public schooling system as a whole, and in particular on the programs and resources of other Government schools in the area
- The impact study and recommendations regarding prospective school closure should, upon completion, be presented to the Government and the school representative bodies of the affected schools
- An appeals mechanism, independent of government and jointly agreed to by the Department and NT COGSO, should be established to adjudicate any disputed decision
- A post rationalisation review should be conducted by a representative committee 12 months after the process is implemented and a public report issued
- In the event that an independent review findings is that the school should remain open, no further review for school closure should take place within three years, except where the relevant school community seeks such a review; and
- In the event of closure of schools and the land on which they are sited are public assets which must not be sold but should remain public assets solely for public education.

Policy 12: Digital Learning & e-Safety

Policy Statement

Safe, equitable and purposeful use of digital technologies is essential to high-quality public education. Digital learning must support inclusion, wellbeing and academic integrity, and be delivered within a framework of strong online safety and privacy protections.

Policy Positions

- 12.1 Students must have equitable access to fit for purpose, quality digital technologies, reliable connectivity and safe online environments, regardless of location, background or ability.
- 12.2 Governments must provide the infrastructure, funding and resources required to ensure equitable access to digital learning for all students.
- 12.3 Digital safety and wellbeing must be retained and strengthened in the Australian Curriculum, remaining responsive, updated and relevant.
- 12.4 Principals, teachers and school staff must take reasonable and foreseeable steps to protect students from harm, including risks in online and digital learning environments.
- 12.5 Platforms and digital tools used in schools must meet nationally endorsed privacy and security standards before being approved for student use.*
- 12.6 Students must be taught to act safely, respectfully and responsibly in digital environments, with the knowledge to protect their privacy, respect others and seek help when they encounter risks online.
- 12.7 Families must be provided with accessible information, resources and opportunities to engage as partners in supporting safe and responsible digital learning.
- 12.8 Teachers must have ongoing professional development to ensure digital learning remains safe, inclusive, and responsive to rapid technological change, including artificial intelligence.
- 12.9 Governments and education authorities must publish transparent reporting on platform approvals, online safety measures and actions taken to address emerging risks.
- 12.10 Student data must be protected, with clear rules on collection, storage, use and sharing that uphold privacy, security and consent.

***Footnote:** The current nationally endorsed standard is the Safer Technologies for Schools (ST4S) framework, administered by Education Services Australia (most recently updated 2023).

Policy 13: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Schools

“Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to address some of the challenges in education and innovate teaching and learning practices. To fully benefit from the potential of AI, schools must be resourced to appropriately manage a range of learning, security and ethical considerations. NTCOGSO supports the six underlying principles of the Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools:

- Meaningful and purposeful human control is a necessity for the use of AI within schools.*
- Quality AI can assist with Education management and delivery, learning and assessment, empower teachers and enhance learning.*
- AI should be teacher-led in the classroom.*
- AI should be accessible to all schools and students.*
- Students will be exposed to and practice the responsible and ethical use of AI as part of their preparation for post-school success.*
- Students and others using generative AI tools must have their privacy and data protected”.*

The Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (Council) recognises that artificial intelligence (AI) is a powerful and transformative technology with new and valuable opportunities for teaching and learning.

Council also acknowledges that AI poses risks and challenges including:

equitable access;

student skill development and assessment;

perpetuation of harmful biases; and

preserving human interaction and connection.

To ensure that AI is used in schools responsibly and ethically in ways that benefit Northern Territory (NT) students and the wider educational ecosystem, Council has developed this policy guidance document which outlines the Vision, Guiding Principles and Guidelines for AI in government schools in the NT (Government Schools).

In this policy guidance, AI means technology or software capable of undertaking tasks which typically require human intelligence.

13.1 Vision

Council envisions a future where:

AI supports and enhances teaching and learning in Government Schools;

AI skills, knowledge and ethics are incorporated into the Government School curriculum and students leave secondary education with the AI capabilities and understanding to flourish in the workplace, higher education and Australian society;

AI is used ethically, responsibly, and beneficially in ways which address the unique diversity and challenges of Government Schools, benefit students and the wider educational ecosystem.

13.2 Guiding Principles

Ethical use: AI should be used in an ethical manner to ensure privacy, security, fairness and human connection. AI use must respect the diversity of the people who live in the NT and take into account the unique educational challenges of Government Schools.

Transparency: The use of AI in Government Schools should be transparent with simple and clear communication to Government School stakeholders about how and why it is being used and what provisions are in place to ensure safe, appropriate, beneficial and ethical use.

Inclusivity: AI should be used in Government Schools to promote equity and access for all students, regardless of their background, ability, location (rural, regional or remote) or learning preferences.

Collaboration: the use of AI in Government Schools should foster collaboration between students, teachers and AI systems. AI should be implemented to complement the work of teachers, not replace them.

Lifelong learning: AI should promote a culture of lifelong learning and equip students with the life skills to adapt to new technologies, enabling them to become active and informed members of their community and the wider Australian society.

13.3 Guidelines

To ensure that AI is used in schools in accordance with the Vision and Guiding Principles, Council supports and advocates for:

AI Governance: Implementation of guidelines, principles, policies and procedures to appropriately govern the use of AI in Government Schools. AI governance should include mechanisms to minimise and counter unfair discrimination, embed respect for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, and respond to the unique challenges of access and equity in Government Schools.

Ongoing Consultation: Facilitation of ongoing consultation with principals, their association, the teaching profession, their unions, parents/caregivers, students, community leaders and other stakeholders in Government Schools.

Professional Development: Provision of ongoing, high-quality and relevant professional development for teachers, along with the allocation of sufficient time to enable safe and effective use of AI technologies in teaching and learning.

Curriculum Development: Representations to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority seeking ongoing review, adaption and augmentation of the Australian Curriculum content to include AI ethics, critical AI literacy and a clear pathway to AI fluency

and AI work readiness for all students. (See ACARA Submission Inquiry into the use of generative artificial intelligence in the Australian Education System (14 July 2023)).

Equitable Access: Investment in AI technologies and supporting infrastructure to enable equitable access to AI use and education for all teachers and students, including those in regional, rural or remote communities, students with disability and those from diverse backgrounds.

Policy Guidance Review

In recognition of the rapid pace of AI development, this policy guidance will be reviewed annually or more frequently at the Council's discretion.

References and Resources

- ACARA Submission Inquiry Into the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Australian Education System (14 July 2023).
- The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (13 December 2019).
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap - Priority Reform Four: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level (July 2020).
- Department of Education's Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Schools (17 November 2023)
- Education Services Australia - Safer Technologies for Schools (ST4S) Initiative (2022)

Policy 14: Pre-School Education

- 14.1 Council affirms that the quality of a child's learning experiences and personal relationships in the first five years of life will have a direct effect on their intellectual development, emotional stability and future educational achievement.
- 14.2 Council affirms that the child who has had quality pre-school education is better equipped to begin formal education, and that every child should have the opportunity to take advantage of this in the twelve months prior to the commencement of formal schooling.
- 14.3 Council affirms that parents should be positively encouraged to enrol their child/children at pre-school, especially those children for whom English is their second language.
- 14.4 Council affirms that pre-school education is particularly important for First Nations children and that every effort should be made to ensure that pre-schools are established and maintained in First Nations communities.
- 14.5 Council affirms that pre-school programs should be available to isolated children in the form of correspondence material, and where practical, by School of the Air.
- 14.6 Council affirms that it is essential to involve parents in pre-school education and to familiarise them with its aims and methods.
- 14.7 Council affirms that liaison between pre-school teachers and teachers involved in the early childhood area of the primary school is essential.
- 14.8 Council affirms that basic pre-school education should be fully funded by government and free of direct charges to parents.
- 14.9 Council affirms that no child should be denied access to pre-school

Policy 15: Religious Instruction

- 15.1 Council affirms Religious Instruction should not become a subject for inclusion as a formal item in the school curriculum.
- 15.2 Council affirms support for 86 of the Regulations of the Northern Territory Education Act (2015)
- a) Subject to this section, the CEO may provide for religious instruction to be to students who are enrolled in a Government school any conditions, and at any time during school hours, that the CEO considers appropriate.
 - b) A parent of a student enrolled in a Government school may, in writing, request the CEO to permit religious instruction to be given to the student by a minister of religion nominated by the parent or by a person authorised by that minister.
 - c) The CEO may, if the CEO considers it practicable to do so, permit a minister of religion, or a person authorised by a minister of religion, to give religious instruction during school hours to students whose parents requested that instruction under subsection (2).
 - d) Religious instruction permitted under subsection (3) must be given for not less than half an hour at a time in every school week, on the days and at the times that the CEO determines.

Policy 16: Stages of Schooling

- 16.1 Council affirms that the education system should be organised in such a way that it provides the opportunity for all students to realise their intellectual and personal potential. Council recognises that to do this the system must acknowledge the differing needs and aspirations of local communities and cultures and must compensate for any educational disadvantage experienced by individuals, groups or whole communities.
- 16.2 Council therefore supports the concept of diversity, flexibility and change, and believes that there is no over-riding reason why uniform organisation of schooling should apply throughout the Northern Territory.
- 16.3 Council affirms that all children should be offered a minimum of thirteen years schooling, and that prior to this they should be offered a period of pre-school education which should include a transition component to provide for preparation for formal learning.

Policy 17: Assessment

- 17.1 Council affirms that assessment of students should be designed to assist teaching staff, parents and students in identifying areas of student weaknesses or strength and in preparing appropriate strategies to deal with the weaknesses or skills so identified.
- 17.2 Council affirms assessment should be both school-based and system wide and should include a variety of techniques.
- 17.3 Schools should be provided with professional support in the development of appropriate assessment techniques.
- 17.4 Council affirms health, gross, and fine motor skills and wellbeing assessment is critical in the early years.
- 17.5 Council believes that assessment procedures should be determined by a body representative of all community interests.
- 17.6 Council believes that a coherent national framework on assessment and accreditation should be developed and adopted for students in Australia.

Policy 18: Teachers

18.1 Qualities of Teachers

- 18.1.1 Council affirms that the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teachers.
- 18.1.2 Council affirms that personal qualities and vocational aptitude are as important as professional knowledge and skill.
- 18.1.3 Council affirms that teachers should be competent, tolerant, aware of community expectations of education, observant of school policy/philosophy, honest in assessing and reporting of student's progress and involved with the local community.
- 18.1.4 Council affirms that teachers selected or recruited for the Northern Territory should demonstrate strong communication skills, have empathy with the school community and be compatible with the likely school environment.
- 18.1.5 Council affirms that first year teachers should only be posted to one teacher schools if they have relevant skills and experience.
- 18.1.6 Council affirms that teachers working in a remote community school, or in a school with a predominantly First Nations student population, for the first time:
 - a) should complete a cross-cultural orientation course, such as those offered by the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) or equivalent providers, before starting at the school,
 - b) should have a basic and satisfactory understanding of First Nations culture, and
 - c) should be given adequate preparation for the physical and social conditions in which they will be required to live and work.
- 18.1.7 Council affirms that teachers in the Northern Territory must be formally registered with the Teacher Registration Board, which includes checks of qualifications and criminal history as part of the national teacher regulatory framework.

18.2 Teacher Training

- 18.2.1 Council affirms that the highest standards should be maintained in the selection and training of potential teachers and supports pathways that encourage mature- age entrants and people with professional experience outside education to enter the profession.

18.2.2 Council affirms that first aid should be a component of pre-service teacher training.

18.3 Professional Development

18.3.1 Council affirms that the Department should provide adequate relief staff to cover all teacher absences.

18.3.2 Council affirms that teaching is a profession and requires recognition as such by government and the community. It also affirms that as such there is a need for teachers to maintain their own professional standards and integrity.

18.3.3 Council affirms that the Territory and/or Commonwealth Government should make resources available for the in-service training of teachers.

18.3.4 Council affirms that rural and remote schools outside Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs urban areas should receive additional funds to enable teachers in those schools to attend in-services and professional development.

18.3.5 Council affirms that in-service training should include the role of parents in the education process and the teaching of communication skills to enable teachers and administrators within the Education Department to relate more effectively to parents and the wider community.

18.4 Staffing Levels

18.4.1 Council affirms that class sizes should be set to ensure quality teaching and learning.

18.4.2 Council affirms that additional needs students should be supported through staffing levels appropriate to their learning requirements.

18.4.3 Council affirms that schools must be staffed adequately to provide access to a broad curriculum.

18.4.4 Council affirms that schools with more than 300 students should have a Principal and two Assistant Principals.

18.4.5 Council affirms that small schools must be adequately staffed to avoid over- reliance on teaching principals.

18.4.6 Council affirms that schools should receive sufficient specialist staff to deliver quality education programs.

18.4.7 Council affirms that support staff must be provided to schools at levels which allow teachers to concentrate on their teaching role.



THE VOICE FOR NT PUBLIC EDUCATION



Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations Inc.