

# Student Wellbeing & Inclusion Programs & Services (SWIPS) bimonthly NT COGSO meeting

Location: Mitchell Centre, Level 14, Sims Room.

Time: 10.00am -11.00am

Date: 10 December 2025

## Attendees:

Michelle Parker, Ruth Mirams, Effie K, Amanda Hubber, Jessica Nowak, Ashlee Haslop, Jenni Carey

## Overview:

Updates were provided on:

- SWIPS election commitments
  - School Counsellors
  - Aboriginal Liaison Officers in Schools Program
- Social model of disability
- SWIPS psychology assessments
- School referrals
- National Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

Due to valuable discussions on the above, the planned discussion on endometriosis did not go ahead.

## Business Arising

### Meeting Opening

Amanda Hubber opened the meeting with introductions and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land.

### Action Register:

Discussed and accepted.

## SWIPS Election Commitments

### School counsellors

- Five school-based counsellors commenced in September based in Katherine High School, Darwin High School, Darwin Middle School, Sanderson Middle School and Dripstone Middle School.
- A further 5 counsellors are scheduled to commence in January 2026.
- Recruitment is continuous and will focus on filling 6 vacant counsellor positions in the Central, Top End and East Arnhem regions.
- Four psychology and 4 social work student placements at CDU have been supported in 2025 and this partnership will continue in 2026

### Aboriginal Liaison Officer Program

- The program was launched in Katherine High and McFarlane Primary by the Minister at the beginning of October.
- NT Police and the department are in discussions with two schools to join the program Term 1, 2026. The principals will consult with their school councils as part of the process.
- Recruitment and retention of ALOs in remote communities is a key challenge.
- The goal is to have 10 ALOs in schools in 2 years, increasing to 40 over time.

## Social Model of Disability and Assessments

The department recognises that supporting students with disability requires supports in understanding the differing models of disability. The department supports the removal of deficit-based approaches and implements a strengths-based approach in line with the [Disability Standards for Education \(2005\)](#), providing a holistic needs-based service delivery to schools and their students regardless of a formal disability or diagnosis. SWIPS services are informed by the Social Model of Disability, which emphasises the importance of identifying and removing social and environmental barriers within schools whilst also acknowledging the strengths, needs, rights and contributions of students in alignment with the human rights model of disability.

Acknowledging formally diagnosed conditions is not a contradiction to the social model of disability and can assist in understanding support needs, planning to remove barriers and providing appropriate adjustments.

## SWIPS Psychology Assessments

SWIPS employ or contract psychologists and they complete 2 types of assessments:

1. Educational assessments focusing on identifying strengths and weaknesses of a child's learning and cognitive profile.
2. Placement review assessments for the purpose of determining continued eligibility for enrolment in a special school or centre.

SWIPS **do not** complete assessments for the purpose of diagnosis. For any diagnostic exploration families are referred to their GP or paediatrician. Families can also access diagnostic assessments through the Child Development Team (Department of Health), a paediatrician or through a private practitioner or practice.

Whilst diagnosis is helpful in understanding a child's disability, a diagnosis is not required to receive adjustments in the classroom or services through SWIPS.

## Students With Disability – Reform Update

- **Student Advocacy Service Expansion to Central Region**

The Department of Education and Training is progressing the expansion of the Student Advocacy Service to the Central Region, where students experience higher levels of need and barriers to participation, including ongoing engagement and inclusion challenges for many students with disability and additional needs, particularly Aboriginal students. A grant process is underway to engage a provider, with rollout planned for January 2026. The expansion will enable local, culturally responsive advocacy to improve access, problem-solving and family-school partnerships. We invite COGSO's support to raise awareness with families and communities, encourage referrals to the service, and share local insights to help ensure effective and culturally responsive implementation.

- **Thriving Kids**

On 20 August 2025, the Australian Government Minister Mark Butler announced the establishment of the Thriving Kids program.

The Thriving Kids program will focus on identifying developmental concerns earlier and establishing a national system of supports for children aged 8 and under with developmental delay and disability, and low to moderate support needs and ensure these children and their families are well supported and able to thrive.

Program design is being led by an Advisory Group co-chaired by Australian Government Minister Mark Butler and Professor Frank Oberklaid. The group brings together experts in child development, disability, education, health and First Nations perspectives, along with two state and territory representatives to guide the program's development.

Priority work is underway to finalise the program outline by the end of 2025. Initial services are expected to commence from 1 July 2026, with a full national rollout anticipated over the following 12 months.

- **DSE Review**

On 26 September 2025, the Australian Government opened an 8 week public consultation period on the 2025 review of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (DSE). The consultation aimed to ensure the standards support students to access and participate in education and training.

Consultation was delivered through a hybrid model, combining on-line engagement and regional round-table sessions. A limited number of regional consultation sessions were held around the country, including sessions in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek on 17-19 November 2025.

The public consultation period has officially closed, and the Australian Government are working with the consultant to prepare a final report, expected to be published in early 2026.

## National Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

On 20 October 2025, the Australian Government completed a National Anti-Bullying Rapid Review to improve how schools across the country prevent, respond to and monitor bullying and other harmful behaviours. The review aims to set a consistent national standard so that every Australian school is a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment.

Key themes from the review include:

- Establishing a National Standard that clearly defines bullying, related harmful behaviours and the expectations for school responses.
- Ensuring every school has a clear, trauma-informed response process, with actions taken within two days of a concern being raised.
- Building capability across school communities, including staff, students and families, to better recognise, respond to and prevent bullying.
- Strengthening data collection, monitoring and national research to understand patterns and outcomes.
- Promoting collaboration across education, health, online safety and community sectors.
- Developing a national public awareness campaign to build community understanding of bullying, including cyberbullying and image-based abuse.

The NT Department of Education and Training is reviewing the findings to understand alignment with existing NT policies and practice, including the Student Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Policy and current school procedures for managing harmful behaviour. Initial analysis indicates the NT is well placed, with several initiatives already underway that support the intent of the review, including the development of a Student Wellbeing Framework. Some areas for local refinement have been identified, including updating NT policy language, strengthening staff capability, clarifying school response processes, improving data consistency and formalising cross-agency collaboration.

Further analysis and updates will be shared with COGSO as alignment planning progresses.

## Endometriosis

The Minister met with NT COGSO on 10 November regarding support and funding for the Period Pain and Endometriosis Talk Program.

The “Health of Students Policy” outlines the obligations schools have to support students experiencing chronic and long-term health conditions, such as endometriosis, by fostering an environment where students feel comfortable seeking help and ensuring reasonable adjustments are made when symptoms affect participation and learning.

Based on feedback provided by NT COGSO the policy is being updated to provide clarity to schools on where they can access support for students from the relevant peak body and existing NT Health services, which are provided at no, or low, cost. These include:

- Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic NT
- Endometriosis Australia.

Health promoting school nurses also support middle schools in the NT with the delivery of health education programs including the topics of reproduction, periods, pain and endometriosis, and where to seek support.

Government and non-government schools provide free period products to reduce barriers to attendance, particularly for students who may otherwise miss school due to a lack of access to these products.

The Australian Curriculum addresses relationships and sexuality education, including health information and help-seeking through the Health and Physical Education learning area. Puberty and menstruation are addressed in age and developmentally appropriate ways from years 4 through to year 10.

## Questions and discussion

- SWIPS to schedule new dates for 2026 and send to NT COGSO

**Meeting Closed:** 11.00am