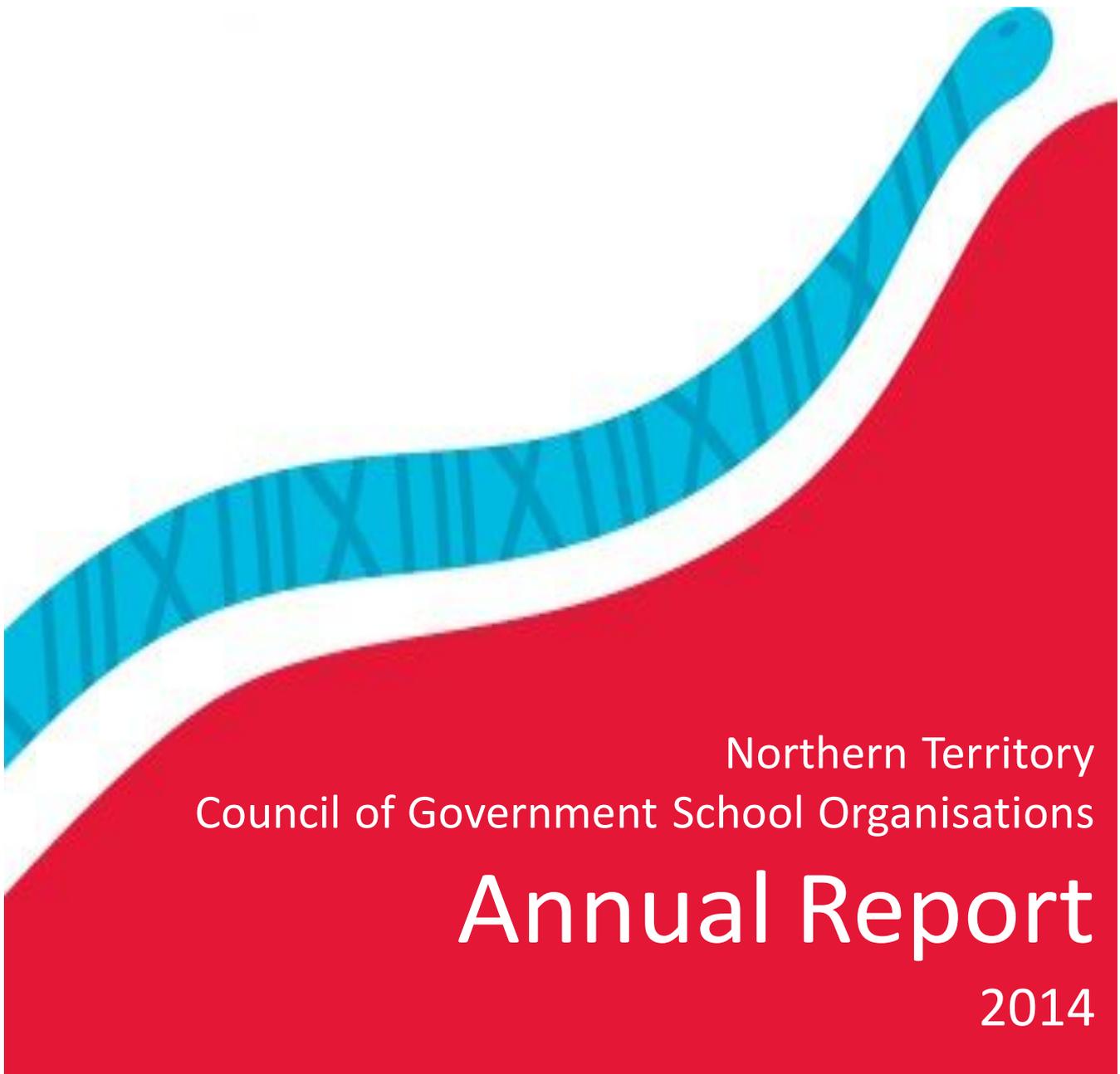




strong schools • strong communities



Northern Territory
Council of Government School Organisations

Annual Report

2014

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you
can use to change the world.”*

Nelson Mandela

COGSO recognises that education provides pathways for young people to explore and build their capacity through academic achievement and skill development that may enable social development, community participation and economic outcomes for individuals and the community as a whole.

COGSO wishes to thank the parents, teachers and staff in government schools across the territory for their efforts in instilling the value of lifelong learning in our young people.

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From the President

I am pleased to present the Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) Annual Report for the period July 2013 to June 2014.

From its inception in 1971 COGSO has been providing a representative voice for families of children in NT Government Schools, advocating for the best educational outcomes for children in the Northern Territory.

School Councils and COGSO are comprised of volunteers giving their skills, life experience, time and expertise to the school and Territory community and as a result, this positive parental engagement has the potential to make a major difference to educational outcomes, at all levels of schooling.

The effects of positive parental engagement for our young people include enhanced cognitive abilities and academic achievement, increased motivation for learning, and improved social and behavioral outcomes.

From a parent perspective, this engagement also provides the opportunity for an enhanced quality of community life by active participation in it.

The 2013/2014 year has seen a large number of issues requiring action or representation by COGSO and school communities. COGSO representation and advocacy is presented within this report.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment of COGSO Executive to the improvement agenda in the Territory public education arena and thank them personally for all their work and commitment in bringing forward our parent/school/community issues and concerns.

I also acknowledge the commitment and dedication of parents and members of school councils across the Territory.

A sustained and systemic effort is to be maintained however, to embed meaningful parent engagement efforts within and across Territory schools. Parents being actively engaged and participating in the conduct of their schools, supports the twin aims of enhancing student outcomes and building stronger communities. The current national reform agenda provides a strong impetus for this and highlights the need for urgency in this area.

On behalf of COGSO I would like to thank each of you for your contributions to our NT Government schools and offer my personal encouragement and support to you to continue to work and advocate for the best for all children in NT Government Schools.

Gerard Reid
President

The Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) is an Incorporated Association with its membership comprising affiliated government school councils.

COGSO's mission is to encourage continual improvement in the provision of quality education outcomes for all students in public education.

To support this mission we actively work towards the advancement of public education by encouraging the fullest co-operation and engagement between home and school, education authorities, the territory government and all other interested parties and bodies.

To fulfill this objective COGSO had three key objectives in 2013/2014:

- to seek a significant growth in the number of parents/guardians engaged with their school
- to maintain the quality and range of support services; to ensure a high level of service is provided
- to promote parent and school partnerships, to encourage parental engagement in school life.

Strategy

The COGSO Strategic Direction forms the overarching strategy for the organisation and reflects our fundamental mission of continual improvement in the provision of quality education outcomes for all students in public education

Aspiration

COGSO's aspiration is to continuously improve our position as the peak parent/school council body in the Northern Territory, focusing on contemporary educational and social issues through the defined strengths of our volunteer membership. We seek to make a significant contribution to the support of young people and their parents by being actively engaged in the government education system.

Objectives

- Continue to build on our position as a peer of the best national peak parent organisations.
- Be a valued partner with communities (local, territory, national), making an impact on contemporary issues.
- Improve underlying leadership and operational capabilities
- Maximise the availability of resources and the assignment of resources to priority areas.

Guiding Principles

- Leadership
- Innovation, initiative and creativity
- Recognition of merit and excellence
- Integrity and high ethical standards
- Mutual respect, collegiality, teamwork and high service standards
- Professionalism, accountability and transparency

Strategic Plan 2014-2016

People and Partnerships

Systems and Support

Strategies and Programs

Goal

Through a focus on governance effectiveness and relationships, we will have the capacity for a flexible and collaborative approach to addressing educational outcomes of all students in public education

We will have a co-ordinated approach for addressing quality educational outcomes for all students in public education as result of improved systems and processes

We will have an increased capacity for a sustainable collaborative approach to addressing Parent and School Council priorities

Strategies

- We will provide a supportive environment for having the right partnership, at the right time and for the right reason, by expanding and strengthening our relationships with key people, organisations and networks.
- We will respond to emerging local, territory and national needs and opportunities with leadership and innovative solutions.
- We will keep abreast of changes to the national and territory education agenda and proactively review our strategies to ensure the best transition for public education in the territory
- We will continue to improve the governance and processes of our Partnerships and we will ensure that our Partnerships are effective and timely by developing a business plan and monitoring our results
- We will provide easy and effective communication and knowledge exchanging processes and tools such as our website, newsletters, media orientation programs and network meetings.

- We will provide easy access to priority data, evidence, information and policies for parents and school councils across the Territory
- We will assist in improving the accessibility of quality education, health and wellbeing services for young people across the Northern Territory
- We will improve the co-ordination and consistency of COGSO services by expanding the use of technology, developing local agreements and working towards a shared understanding of the educational issues impacting on the territory
- We will support parents and school councils to continuously improve service to their community and the Territory as a whole, by undertaking an annual survey of community educational needs and advocating continuously for quality educational outcomes for all students in public education

- We will improve parent and school council engagement by understanding our collective skill needs and co-ordinating local training opportunities
- We will improve parent and school council ability to manage change in the local and territory community by understanding our collective needs and co-ordinating local training opportunities
- We will seek or support others in obtaining or sharing resources for collaborative initiatives that address our priorities
- We will seek or support others in obtaining or sharing resources for community capacity building programs that target the needs of the community.

Approved 7 September 2013

Snapshot of Performance

1 Provision of Information

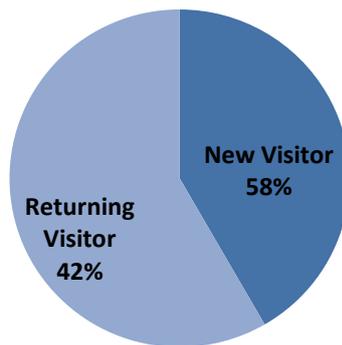
Website

Audience

Our website received 1145 visits during the last 12 months, with an average time spent on the COGSO website of 3 minutes.

Of the 1145 visits, 58% or 668, were new visitors.

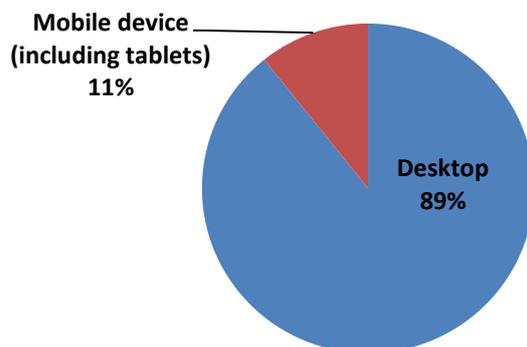
NT COGSO website



Technology

1022 visitors used desktop computers, while 123 visitors used mobile devices, including tablets, to access the website.

Website access and mobile devices



2 Policies and Initiatives

pareNT

pareNT is published each term by COGSO and distributed to schools throughout the Territory. It is a key method of communication and engagement with parents and schools. The Department of Education Chief Executive, utilises pareNT to directly address and connect with Territory parents. Schools are also encouraged to contribute stories for inclusion.

Copies pareNT are uploaded to the COGSO website to ensure ease of access for all parents and schools.

COGSO and DoE survey of school councils

COGSO and the Department of Education will be working to develop an appropriate instrument to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, effectiveness, capability and timeliness of advice. It is anticipated this survey will be undertaken in early 2015.

Key NT and Federal educational issues communicated to NT Government School communities

Through the use of electronic and print media, including the use of our Website and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, the following educational issues were communicated, not only to School Councils, but the broader NT community.

- 'Gonski" or the Better Schools Plan
- NT Budget - Education Issues
- NT Indigenous Education Review
- Review of NT Education Act
- Middle Years Review
- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
- Federal Government Funding for Indigenous Education
- Hearing Awareness Program
- National Curriculum Review
- The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters
- KiTES- 'Kids in Town Engaged in School
- Federal Anti-truancy Program
- Education Payment Boost for the Back to School Payment Scheme

3 Representation and advocacy

Number of affiliated School Councils by Region

Affiliation by School Councils is not mandated. However, within the schools with a defined school council model, COGSO for the first time, now has a 100% affiliation rate.

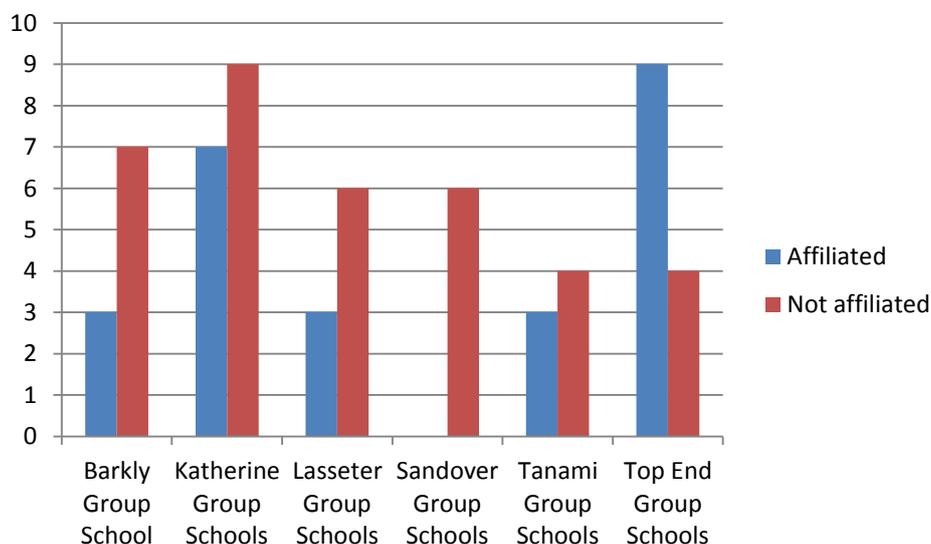
This total coverage allows for a high level of engagement, particularly in seeking and receiving feedback from parents and schools on DoE policies and reviews. One recent demonstration of this engagement followed the announcement by DoE and the Minister for Education to survey the Northern Territory school community to seek feedback on potential changes to term and holiday structure. COGSO was able to share this survey with over 20,000 individuals.

A new key area for growth for COGSO is within the group schools model. Traditionally, schools within this model are provided with governance support and advocacy through department reporting lines. However, a positive trend over recent years has seen group schools seeking COGSO affiliation. The Department of Education schools directory lists 61 schools which fall under the group schools model in the Northern Territory. Currently, 40% of those group schools are affiliated with COGSO.

Although this represents positive development in the management and representation of remote schools, it must be recognised that 60% of group schools are not currently affiliated with COGSO. This represents a potential area of limitation of engagement for the Department of Education, particularly as the Indigenous Education review progresses.

Overall, there are 111, or 71.6% of all NT public schools which are affiliated with COGSO. There are 44, or 28.3% of NT public schools which are not affiliated with COGSO. Many of these schools are one teacher/principal schools.

Affiliation of **group schools** can be further identified by region in the following graph.



Governance

Basis for Authority

The NT Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO) is governed by its constitution along with the Northern Territory Associations Act. COGSO has all the usual powers associated with an incorporated association.

Council

The governing authority of COGSO is the Council comprising all affiliated School Councils. The council meets at least once each year and sets the objectives and policy directions of the organisation.

Executive

The management of Council is vested in the Executive, which has power to do all things necessary to achieve the objects of Council

The Executive consists of:

- a) President;
- b) Vice President;
- c) Treasurer; and
- d) One representative of each Regional Council, being the Chairman of the Regional Council, or such other person nominated by the Regional Council,

Executive may invite an additional 3 persons who the Executive considers to have special qualifications, knowledge or experience which will be able to assist the Executive in the exercise and performance of its functions by the giving of information or advice, to be a member of Executive.

Executive Members

President	Mr Gerard Reid
Vice President	Mr Adam Thacker
Treasurer	Mr Michael de Luca
Barkly	Ms Coralie James
Darwin	Nick O'Loughlin
East Arnhem	Melissa Mills /Jeff Cook <i>from January 2014</i>
Katherine	Vacant
Palmerston/Rural	Wally Mauger
Southern	Matt Skoss
Peter Garrigan	Executive Member

Management

Executive Officer

COGSO's Executive Officer is responsible for managing staff and physical and financial assets of the organisation, in accordance with the strategy approved by the Council and Executive. The Executive Officer has charge of the overall direction of corporate planning, budget activities and external relations.

Executive Officer	Ms Michelle Parker <i>The position was vacant for the first quarter of the financial year pending recruitment.</i>
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