

NORTHERN TERRITORY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS INCORPORATED

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.