Transforming Indigenous Education

Education Minister Marion Scrymgour will today announce an overhaul of the delivery of remote education, with a focus on involving Indigenous communities, getting kids to school regularly and allowing them to concentrate on getting basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Ms Scrymgour said her statement, *Transforming Indigenous Education*, sought to involve communities as a key part of changing attitudes to education in Indigenous communities, so that going to school received the highest priority.

“Some Indigenous parents and communities put a high value on education – others don’t, and we need to change those attitudes,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“While we are rolling out our Closing the Gap package to improve outcomes across a range of areas, including education – *Transforming Indigenous Education* includes further and broader policy reforms that go to the delivery of education.

“These reforms aim to get kids to school, attending regularly and free of the social and health problems that hamper the learning of basic literacy and numeracy.

“The Northern Territory Government will work with the Commonwealth to provide the facilities and resources needed to achieve these goals in partnership with these communities.

“The upcoming Budget delivers $17.7 million for Closing the Gap education initiatives including extra teachers, upgrades to remote schools, new mobile pre-schools, an attendance team and a campaign on the value of schooling.

Ms Scrymgour said she had also directed the Department of Employment Education and Training to put national testing, attendance and enrolment figures up on its website.
“It’s important that there is a clear understanding of these figures so we can measure the improvement I am confident we will see in these areas.”

Ms Scrymgour today announced five new major policy directions would be pursued by the Government to transform Indigenous education:

- The establishment of Community Partnership Education Boards, in the first instance in the Warlpiri Triangle (Lajamanu, Yuendumu, Nyirrpi and Willowra) and East Arnhem, the Miwatj or Yolngu Matha speaking communities. These Boards will give the communities strong and genuine community ownership over a range of education services in their area, from schools and libraries to school based nurses. The model could include a regional residential hostel;

- In partnership with the Federal Government, investigate the establishment of early learning and development family centres. These centres should ensure that Indigenous children in remote communities are born healthy and have health care and education in early childhood;

- The establishment of community based residential hostels so young people in remote Indigenous communities can access a quality secondary education in or near their home communities;

- Investigate establishing *Fit for Learning* services to provide health, welfare and wellbeing needs for Indigenous students in town camps so they can concentrate on learning at school; and

- The expansion of *Growing Our Own*, to build the Territory’s local Indigenous education workforce – increasing the numbers of, and skills among, Indigenous school based and departmental staff.

Schools to receive funding in Budget 08 as part of Closing the Gap include:

- $1 million for Alekarenge to construct a new specialist senior learning space;
- $2 million to convert the homeland centre at Alparra into a school;
- $1.15 million for upgrades to the Ngukurr School including additional specialist senior learning space;
- $1.25 million for additional classrooms and facilities at Ramingining;
- $2 million to convert the homeland centre at Yilpara to a school;
- $1.55 million for Yirrkala to replace the current demountable block with four new classrooms; and
- $1.25 million for improvements to the primary school area facilities at Yuendumu.

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