

Review of Secondary Education in the NT **SUMMARY**

The Northern Territory Department of Education is on a journey to become the most improving education system in Australia and is committed to a strong and equitable public education system where every child has the opportunity to engage, grow and achieve.



Introduction

We are committed to successful transitions beyond schooling for all students across the Territory.

Flexible delivery of academic, vocational and cultural pathways enables students' success and provides them with the capabilities and certification they need to take their next steps.

Supporting successful transitions beyond schooling is one of the seven system priorities of the Education NT Strategy 2021–2025. The Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory (the Review) supports this goal and commitment.

Our education system must be responsive to the many delivery contexts in the Northern Territory (NT), reflect the rich cultural diversity among learners, in an innovative learning environment that provides real pathways for our students for jobs of the future.



Approach

The Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory was conducted by Deloitte Access Economics in partnership with the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, between November 2022 and October 2023.

The Review involved a comprehensive desktop evidence review, policy analysis, analysis of school and student data, as well as multiple rounds of stakeholder engagement with schools across all regions in the Northern Territory, industry, policymakers, peak body organisations, other education providers and systems (nationally and internationally), and subject matter experts.



Vision for the future

The Review sets out a vision for a future secondary education system built on:

An excellent and equitable system that supports all students to achieve

- Building on a base of existing best practice and innovative delivery, the NT's inherent strengths of language, knowledge and culture, and the agility that comes from being a relatively small system.

A guaranteed standard of local secondary school provision regardless of geographic location

- Providing choice to students and families through diverse and flexible pathways.
- Guaranteeing students are able to complete the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) in their local community and achieve core literacy and numeracy skills as a foundation of success beyond school.
- Continuing to facilitate boarding pathways but invest towards strengthening access to high quality local secondary education provision (including through regionalised supports) rather than traditional boarding options.

An engaging learning design that drives student outcomes ensuring continuity of learning, effective transitions and meaningful learning

- Making culturally responsive and meaningful learning a distinguishing feature of the NT education system and position the NT as a leading jurisdiction in terms of innovating and adapting the Australian Curriculum to be flexible, culturally responsive, and engaging for students.
- Supporting transitions throughout secondary schooling by moving away from the current model of middle schooling towards more comprehensive models overtime. Where implemented through close consultation with local school communities, this will support students to effectively transition throughout secondary schooling and break down silos between existing middle and senior secondary schools.

A model of delivery that is differentiated and needs-based delivering meaningful and flexible pathways to completion

- Aspiring to be a schooling system that offers universal possibilities for pathways, equality of access for young people in all contexts, and flexibility of pathways to suit their aspirations for life beyond school.

These pathways cannot be delivered in the same way in all locations and should not be the same in every context and every school.

- Designing an approach from the top down (identifying local industry and skills needs, and providing guided choice to schools) while building from the ground up (ensuring community aspirations are reflected in the design of pathways, and equipping students with the appropriate skills, knowledge and capabilities).

An approach to change that emphasises stability, continuity and sustained focus

- Ensuring continuity and longevity of existing successful initiatives, ensuring coordination and coherence of delivery, and growing capability to implement and develop programs, and plan for their sustainability.
- Securing additional investment to give reform the best chance of success and impact. The recommendations for change will require significant additional resourcing directly in schools and communities, the central and regional layers of the system, and in empowering communities and increasing local decision-making and capacity to deliver.

Review key findings



Finding 1: A range of desired outcomes, including value and importance of school completion



Finding 2: A need to recognise broader conceptions of success



Finding 3: NTCET is a key strength that offers significant opportunities



Finding 8: Learning design should be meaningful, culturally responsive, and cater to diverse needs



Finding 9: A need to build upon system guidance, resources and supports



Finding 10: A need to support schools to deliver flexible learning approaches to meet student need



Finding 11: Key programs (e.g. Learning on Country) are gaining traction



Finding 16: Growing possibilities and strengths of blended and online delivery



Finding 17: Boarding has not worked for all students



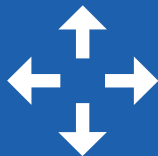
Finding 18: A desire for key programs and partnerships to be widened



Finding 19: A need for the system to systematically establish partnerships



Finding 4: Middle schooling has not delivered on intended outcomes



Finding 5: Student transitions are not occurring effectively



Finding 6: A need to ensure pathways are meaningful and tailored



Finding 7: A deliberate and coordinated approach to pathways is required



Finding 12: There is inequity of access and uneven previous investment across the NT



Finding 13: Stakeholders hold a conviction and urgent desire to provide access in remote contexts



Finding 14: Regional delivery models can be expanded, particularly where there are no pathways to NTCET



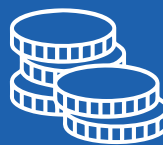
Finding 15: A need for greater coherence, coordination and support for remote schools



Finding 20: A need to work in partnerships to improve educational outcomes



Finding 21: Numerous supports must be in place to enable successful delivery



Finding 22: The NT school funding model is not appropriate to support secondary education delivery in small, remote settings



The case for change

The need to provide equity of access and drive educational improvement for all learners across the Northern Territory creates a case for change for the government secondary education system.

Building on the existing strengths of the system

There is a strong spine of schools in the NT already delivering diverse pathways (both academic and vocational) and high-quality secondary education. These outer regional and remote schools have demonstrated high NTCET completion rates and achievement of Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) in recent years. There have also been recent successes in remote areas. Existing infrastructure and innovative models of delivery are expanding students' access to secondary education provision and contributing to rich learning, for example through distance education schools.

All of these strengths of infrastructure and delivery can be used as the basis for continued improvement and excellence in secondary education delivery, including through the identification of gaps and a case for investment to achieve an equivalent standard of access across the NT.

Striving for an excellent and equitable system, with high expectations for educational outcomes for all students

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration sets out a goal for the Australian education system to promote excellence and equity. This means providing all learners with equality of opportunity that enables them to reach their potential and achieve their highest educational outcomes. International research suggests that the best education systems in the world achieve excellence and equity of outcomes and that these goals reinforce each other: equity of outcomes supports excellence, and excellence cannot be pursued in isolation from equity. The NT has a responsibility to ensure there is excellence and equity of outcomes for all learners.

Responding to the unique delivery context

The Northern Territory is among the most complex systems in the world, with delivery of secondary education occurring in a unique context. The cultural, demographic, and geographic attributes of the NT and its education system are a unique strength and opportunity and should be recognised as such. However, they pose challenges and complexities for delivery that are more pronounced in the NT than other jurisdictions in Australia. Schooling delivery needs to cater for high levels of geographic dispersion, significant social, economic and educational disadvantage and cultural diversity.



Implementing for success

Work is already underway to strengthen secondary education provision across the NT. The full journey of reform outlined by the Review will take time to implement. It will be important to establish processes to enable authentic community engagement and local decision-making, including consultation with industry and key stakeholders which are necessary to understand the needs and aspirations of communities and drive the place-based actions necessary to support the future economic and workforce needs of the NT.

Implementing the recommendations from the Review will be an integral component of broader education reform which will consolidate the Department's existing successful educational strategies: the recommendations from this Review, and other reviews including the Review of Effective Enrolment and the Students with Disability Funding Review.





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