

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The context of Northern Territory schooling

Introduction

The Northern Territory, with a population of 187,132 people and land area of 1,348,000 square kilometres, has a population density of approximately 14 persons per 100 square kilometres. Educational services are provided to a diverse multicultural and multilingual population scattered over an area 30 per cent larger than the combined areas of New South Wales and Victoria. Many remote centres are accessible only by air or sea and others are often not accessible during the wet season from October to March. In the Northern Territory, 52.3 per cent of schools and 23.2 per cent of students are located in remote areas with varying degrees of access disadvantage.

The physical and social environment imposes exceptional access and cost disabilities. School-age children comprise 24.5 per cent of the total population—a greater proportion than in any of the States. In 1997, there were 12,604 Indigenous students who comprised 34.6 per cent of Northern Territory students (36,466). Students are widely dispersed across the Northern Territory, necessitating many small schools, which are expensive to maintain and supply. Additional costs in curriculum and language support staff and resources are incurred due to the diverse languages and cultures of the student body.

For many years, migrants have been coming to the Territory from all over the world. Some remained, while others have departed (examples being the European and Chinese miners of the mid-nineteenth century and the Vietnamese boat people of the 1980s), all of whom positively contributed to our cultural and linguistic diversity. In addition to the more than 50 Indigenous languages spoken by students in Territory schools, there are over 60 migrant

languages spoken. Of these 15 are in daily use by significant numbers of people. One-third of young people between five and 17 years have a language other than English as their first language. Education is provided in 35 languages (including English), and there are 20 bilingual schools.

A high degree of mobility, both intra-Territory and interstate, is a characteristic of the Northern Territory population. Many Indigenous Territorians, especially those in isolated areas, move frequently between their communities, homeland centres and urban centres, for a myriad of purposes, including traditional cultural commitments, social or educational reasons. Non-Indigenous residents are also very mobile, mainly because of employment opportunities, children's education, or family ties. Erratic attendance at school for some students, as a result of their parents' mobility, often affects their capacity to gain optimum benefit from the educational programs provided. The provision of educational services is affected because high mobility is also a factor in the Territory's teaching population: teachers in our schools come from all States of Australia and overseas, often stay a short time (especially in the isolated communities) and then depart.

Contextual information about special circumstances

Government sector

In 1997, there were 28,294 full-time students (77.6 per cent of Northern Territory students) enrolled in 144 government schools.

Catholic sector

There were 5,009 full-time students enrolled in 1997 in the ten Catholic urban schools (Darwin and Alice Springs), and five remote schools, representing 13.7 per cent of Northern Territory students. Of the ten urban schools, two were secondary, seven were primary and one offered both

secondary and primary schooling. A new school named Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Alice Springs resulted from the amalgamation of Catholic High School and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School. A new Catholic primary school at Humpty Doo was opened in 1997. The remote schools include two Community Education Centres. As a trial, two schools offered mainstream year 8 studies with face-to-face teaching for the first time.

The two homeland centre schools are slowly becoming functional schooling environments for children at Woodykupiidiya and Wurankuwu. The Wurankuwu homeland centre school which is associated with the Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School was established on a trial basis.

This was the third year that year 12 students were enrolled in Catholic Education in Alice Springs, O'Loughlin Catholic College in Darwin offered year 12 studies for the second year in succession.

Independent sector

In 1997, there were 3,163 full-time students enrolled in 14 independent schools which represents 8.7 per cent of Northern Territory student enrolments.

During 1997, the independent schools sector continued its strong growth with increased enrolments and the opening of two new schools in Central Australia — the Alice Springs Steiner School and the Aboriginal owned and controlled Nyangatjara College, which serves four communities in the Uluru area.

Northern Territory/Commonwealth issues

Disadvantaged schools program index of disadvantage

The Northern Territory applauds the implementation by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSED) in 1997. However, the differential weightings needed to reflect different levels of socioeconomic disadvantage recommended by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Taskforce on School Statistics (TOSS) have not been implemented. The TOSS recommendations addressed the significant different levels of disadvantage experienced by students within the target group.

The Northern Territory allocates the Literacy Program funding for school-based projects (as per the MCEETYA TOSS recommendation) using the ABS IRSED with five differential weightings to take account of the differing degrees of socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by its students.

Country Areas General Component resource allocation formula

The formula used by the Commonwealth to allocate funding for the Country Areas General Component in 1997 continues to allocate funding to students in close proximity to major population centres at the same level as those with much greater access disadvantage.

This formula was found to be inequitable by the Tomlinson review (1985), Ashenden and Milligen (1993), and Rousseaux (1993) and this has been continually referred to DEETYA in an attempt to rectify the situation. For example, persons 151 kilometres from population centres of 10,000 are resourced at the same level as persons who live in excess of 1,000 kilometres from a centre of the same size. Students in remote areas in all States and the Northern Territory are disadvantaged by this formula. Many of these remote communities also have significant numbers of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged populations in Australia, including Aborigines.

Objectives of schooling

The Northern Territory Department of Education's Plan 1997–2000 identifies objectives relating to educational outcomes, access to education services, client focus and resource management.

Northern Territory and Commonwealth objectives for Targeted and Quality Schooling Programs are:

1. improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students in the target groups, with particular emphasis on the early years;
2. incorporating strategies to address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students into whole school planning;
3. improving student attendance, participation and retention;
4. providing appropriate technology to address the specific needs of students disadvantaged by isolation;

5. providing professional development initiatives for teachers which will improve the delivery of programs to target groups; and
6. encouraging active parent/community/interagency involvement in programs and initiatives to achieve optimal outcomes for students in the target groups.

Government initiatives in 1997

Literacy through libraries

This project provides opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes through the improvement of library resources in remote schools. The project offered an integrated, Territory-wide approach to updating remote school libraries in all regions, in consultation with relevant school and regional staff.

Library consultants visited many schools in remote areas to consult with staff and assess needs in terms of the collection, layout, shelving, computer equipment and professional development. Follow-up visits were made to each school to complete the implementation of the project.

The project provided quality resources (such as books and CD-ROMs) which are current, attractive as well as educational, cultural and age/reading level appropriate. Professional development on the use of the AGAMA automated library system and the effective use of the library collection in literacy and educational programs was conducted. Each school now has a complete catalogue of all library resources available on an automated system providing staff and students with a wider range of information which is being accessed with increasing frequency.

Volunteers for Isolated Students Education

The Volunteers for Isolated Students Education (VISE) project provided tutoring assistance to remote families who have children participating in distance education programs. Retired teachers volunteered to spend six to eight weeks with a family providing valuable advice about classroom strategies and support for tutor parents in all aspects of assisting their children with their educational programs. This project has proved to be particularly valuable in

specialist subject areas, for students with special needs, in facilitating liaison with school-of-the-air teachers and in relieving parent tutors in times of medical or other emergencies. Commonwealth funding was used to meet the travel expenses of approximately 20 tutors travelling to stay with remote families in the Katherine and Alice Springs regions.

Development of the NT Literacy and Numeracy Plan

In July 1997, a Literacy and Numeracy Task Group, broadly representative of all stakeholders in school education in the Northern Territory, was appointed by the Secretary to develop a coordinated Northern Territory Plan, and monitor its implementation in government and non-government schools.

The Northern Territory Literacy and Numeracy Plan will be published in two parts: *The NT Literacy Plan*, and *The NT Numeracy Plan*.

The Task Group is now in the process of identifying gaps in literacy provision; the policies that need to be developed or amended; and additional materials, programs and processes that need to be provided. A similar identification process will occur for numeracy during 1998.

Early intervention

In 1997, the education authorities in the Northern Territory did not have in place system-wide intervention programs for students considered 'at risk' of not reaching the national literacy and numeracy goals at the end of their first year of schooling. However, various forms of intervention occurred via a range of system-approved programs and strategies. Individual primary and secondary schools in all systems chose to develop or adopt other intervention programs that met the specific needs of their students.

It is a responsibility of the NT Literacy and Numeracy Task Group to identify gaps that exist in the provision of appropriate intervention programs for students 'at risk' of not reaching the national literacy and numeracy goals both at the end of their first year of schooling and in subsequent years. The Group makes recommendations about changes or extensions to existing programs, the adoption of new programs and the more effective allocation of resources. It is intended that suitable programs will be researched, trialed and evaluated with a view to system-wide implementation in due course.

Currently, a range of system, regional and school-based programs provide support to students below the acceptable literacy standard.

The Student Services branch provides specialist services through the two NT Early Intervention Resource Centres which work with children from birth until entry to full-time schooling. Behaviour Management Services based at STAR (Students at Risk) centres provide advisory and programming support appropriate to the needs of students in primary and secondary schools who experience moderate to severe behavioural difficulties.

A range of school-based intervention projects funded through the Commonwealth Literacy Program were also conducted.

English as a Second Language (ESL) support

In the Northern Territory, the ESL program provided assistance to students for whom English is a second language to enable them to develop English language competence, and facilitate their active participation in primary and secondary education. Initial intensive English language support was given when necessary, and ESL support was provided within the mainstream and across the curriculum. Support in 1997 included the New Arrivals program, provision of specialist ESL teachers and Stage 1 and 2 of ESL courses.

The New Arrivals program catered for non-English speaking background students, newly arrived in Australia, or born in Australia to families who speak a language other than English at home. These students were provided with ESL programs which were delivered in Darwin through either of the two Intensive English Units or at the Secondary Intensive English Unit. Students living in centres outside



Students with poor understanding of English using a set of cards to comprehend fractions in Maths, Darwin High School.

Darwin were supported by part-time instructors (PTIs) who assisted individual students to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills in English.

Specialist ESL teachers appointed to primary and secondary schools provide support for classroom teachers working with ESL students and direct support for ESL students (approximately 50 per cent of whom are Indigenous). These above-establishment positions were allocated to schools on the basis of the identified needs of the ESL learners attending the school. Supplementary funds for professional development programs for classroom teachers of ESL students were provided through the Commonwealth Literacy Program.

Stage 1 and 2 ESL Courses were offered within Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) guidelines to eligible students.

A number of school-based projects for ESL students were funded through the Commonwealth Literacy Program.

Other quality programs in place to support the literacy development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students included: ESL Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners; Bilingual Programs in Aboriginal Schools; English Only Programs in Aboriginal Schools; Walking Talking Texts; Intensive English, Foundation and General Studies.

ESL - Indigenous Language Speaking Students

The Northern Territory applauds the Commonwealth's announcement of the introduction of the new Intensive English language support for Indigenous students in 1998. This initiative will address the previous anomaly where migrants could access intensive language support through the New Arrivals Program while Australian Indigenous students could not receive similar support. This initiative is expected to have a significant impact on Indigenous education.

Programs for parents

Programs for parents provided through the Department of Education in 1997 included the Partners in Education: Parent Policy initiatives and the Parent as Teachers program. Through the Partners in Education program grants, were provided to primary and secondary schools to support

school-based initiatives that encouraged parent/family involvement in their children's learning through programs that reflected the needs of the local school community.

The Parents as Teachers program is based on the philosophy that parents are their child's first and most influential teacher. The program emphasises the support provided by parents of children aged 0–3. These parents facilitate the development of skills which will help their children to become successful learners, acquire language skills and encourage curiosity and self-esteem. The program encourages both parents to read to children from birth, and specialist early intervention teachers to use an age and stage appropriate picture book during their home visits.

Inclusion of students with disabilities

To provide a greater focus on inclusive curriculum provision for students with disabilities, the funds available to support these students have been centralised, allowing two new committees with Territory-wide representation to be established. These committees provide policy advice, monitor activities in the area of special education, and make decisions relating to the equitable distribution of available funds.



Physiotherapist assisting student during aerobic warm-up exercises, Henbury Avenue School.

Approximately 75 per cent of the funds provided inclusion support for students with moderate to severe disabilities and their teachers through the employment of Inclusion Support Assistants. Schools also implemented a range of projects to support other eligible students within the whole school setting.

Funding provided through the Commonwealth's Special Education – School Support component was distributed through regional committees on a submission basis for projects which addressed the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities. Schools were encouraged to involve parents and other community members in the design and implementation of projects.

A project officer distributed information about Implementing Special Education Policy in Aboriginal Schools to Aboriginal schools. During 1997, thirty Aboriginal communities were consulted. The project officer has begun to determine the implementation strategy.

The Department continued to provide a range of advisory and therapy services throughout the Territory, coordinated

through the Student Services branch. A review and update of their data collection and recording procedures resulted in a significant increase in the number of identified students with disabilities in 1997, particularly in those from remote areas.

Performance management

By December 1997, the majority of schools and Departmental branches developed and implemented performance management programs.

The Performance Management Program applies to all public service employees of the Department of Education. To assist in its implementation, extensive in-service training was provided to workplace managers and key people involved in the process.

Workplaces were expected to establish clear links with individual performance and the workplace's plan. The Department's Performance Management policy outlined specific criteria for all Performance Management models, and workplaces were encouraged to develop individual programs that reflect the uniqueness of their area.

An outcome of the program will be the identification of training needs that will be collated centrally. These identified training needs will serve as an important source of information that can be used for departmental strategic planning.

Performance programs

The Department has in place a range of performance programs designed to assist and support employees.

All new employees receive a Workplace Induction to familiarise them with workplace plans, priorities, operational methods and expectations. Employees on probation receive support and supervision after which their competencies are assessed by peers and supervisors. Following a successful probationary assessment, employees participate in the ongoing Performance Management program. This program is designed to reflect a core set of Department-wide objectives coupled with unique individual worksite goals. Consequently individual workplaces have established their own programs that are complementary to the Department's Performance Management program.

For exemplary teachers who choose to remain in the classroom, the Department offers a Master Teacher program (now called the Teacher of Exemplary Practice program). Candidates provide evidence against a set of benchmarks to show the quality of their teaching practice. The program has

three levels, each with a corresponding allowance to reflect the level of practice.

Schools and self-management

The Department recognised that local initiative, consultation and participation were essential if schools were to meet the specific and special needs of the local community and achieve excellence.

The *School Management Handbook*, produced in 1997 for distribution in 1998, superseded the former handbook. The new handbook has been designed as a general reference of departmental policies and procedures for the whole school community and is a key source of information and guidance to school councils and administrators responsible for local school management.

Teachers in Industry Program

The Teachers in Industry Program enables teachers to return to industry, on temporary release, to gain up-to-date knowledge of work practices and issues so that they can pass recent relevant career information on to students. In 1997, teachers involved themselves in tourism and hospitality organisations, the Territory Wildlife Park, the Northern Territory Museum, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and a publishing house. Eleven teachers accessed this scheme in 1997.

Vocational and Education Training (VET) in Schools review

As a result of national initiatives in the area of VET in Schools, the Northern Territory was encouraged to offer appropriate programs to increase the range of study options for its students.

Issues arising from the implementation of these programs were reviewed in 1997. Major recommendations from the review were: the need for greater coordination of activities; ongoing system and school support; and ongoing liaison between all Departmental officers whose work involves aspects of VET in schools.

Catholic education initiatives in 1997

Retention and participation

All three secondary providers of the Catholic sector, O'Loughlin Catholic College, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College and St John's College offered year 12 classes in 1997. As a result of the introduction of senior classes, the participation and retention rates of the system have increased.

In remote Aboriginal schools there was an overall increase in the number of students undertaking courses for secondary-aged students. Students took on studies in Intensive English, Foundation and General Studies. In addition, they took on secondary studies through correspondence and face-to-face teaching.

A number of students from these remote Aboriginal schools attended St John's College in Darwin as boarders. Students continuing their studies away from their home communities continued to experience many difficulties associated with the separation from their close family grouping. The College provided greater liaison with feeder schools and more consistent entry benchmarks for the students.

The introduction of VET studies at Xavier Community Education Centre, Bathurst Island, has enabled school-aged students and older who are not attending school, to access courses that link to work opportunities in the community. On Bathurst Island, a trial has been mounted to provide mainstream secondary face-to-face teaching and courses to Indigenous students at the Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School and Xavier Community Education Centre.

Whilst Indigenous Education units in urban schools continued in some form, there was a major shift in philosophy. Initiatives were made to include Indigenous children in mainstream classes across all year levels. The Kumamadjiin unit at Sacred Heart School, Palmerston, became a Learning Centre and provided educational support for students from Aboriginal and Islander communities, instead of providing a major school experience for Indigenous students. The number of such units at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Alice Springs, was reduced from three to two. At the junior primary campus, children were

mainstreamed. Indigenous staff supported families and students in accessing education and remaining at school.

Decision making and community participation

Catholic schools operated with assistance from school boards and other parent organisations. Community schools continued to move towards the establishment of school boards. Through its staff members, Catholic education was represented on the Northern Territory Board of Studies and several of its committees, the Indigenous Education Consultative Group and the Block Grant Authority (BGA). Discussions continued with Indigenous people concerning the forming of a Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education group. Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) committees, parents and Aboriginal and Islander resource officers accepted greater responsibility for school initiatives and contributed to discussions on school programs with school staff.

Indigenous teacher education

The number of Indigenous teachers studying to become four-year trained teachers continued to increase during 1997. The Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program continued a mixed mode of study, with students spending time at Batchelor College and back in their community. Trainee teachers accessed studies through Deakin University in Victoria. In addition, several teachers undertook studies by distance mode from the Broome Campus of Notre Dame University, Western Australia. Most Catholic schools in remote Aboriginal communities now have at least three trained Indigenous teachers on staff. School communities support Indigenous teachers in training. Mentor programs for those moving into teaching and administration positions continued in 1997. The first Tiwi principal was appointed to Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School on Bathurst Island. The new principal worked with a team of four Tiwi women as the 'assistant principal'.

Indigenous education in the urban environment

The Indigenous Education Program concentrated on increasing and maintaining the employment of Aboriginal and Islander resource officers in each Catholic urban school.

The resource officers were involved in ongoing in-service training and professional development programs.

There was an increase in the networking of the Indigenous community groups. The regular meetings of representatives from each of the schools strengthened and encouraged the involvement of Indigenous people in school programs. Resource Officers organised cultural activities in Darwin Catholic urban schools.

Collaborative planning by the Indigenous education consultant, principals, special education professionals, classroom teachers and resource officers has assisted individual student learning and ensured the needs and aspirations of the Indigenous students were met.

Gender education and the achievement of gender equity

A Catholic Education Office resource coordinator worked with schools on gender equity issues in relation to staffing and staff organisational practices. Catholic Education was represented on the Northern Territory Board of Studies committee which was responsible for writing the Gender Equity in Education policy document.

Equity initiatives

Under the Commonwealth Targeted Programs, funding was made available to the Catholic Education Council, enabling initiatives in Literacy, Special Education – School Support and Country Areas programs to be implemented in urban and rural Catholic Schools. Joint Intervention funds were accessed for students with significant levels of disability, through a trisectorial committee. Catholic schools in remote communities continued to have access to Commonwealth targeted programs funding through the Northern Territory Department of Education. The Catholic sector's priorities for Commonwealth targeted programs emphasised the improvement of literacy and numeracy levels.

Literacy and numeracy

First Steps

All Catholic primary schools in urban and rural areas were involved in the First Steps program. All regional centres with the exception of Katherine had a trained tutor on staff. Tutors from Catholic schools helped to

support teachers in government, independent and Catholic schools.

Walking Talking Texts

The basis for the English literacy program in remote schools is Walking Talking Texts, a program for students who have a language other than English as their first language. The program was supported by the Department of Education and a consultant from the Catholic Education Office.

Student literacy outcomes in 1997

The Northern Territory Board of Studies tested students in reading and mathematics in years 4 and 6 under the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP). These tests were multi-stage, meaning that a range of content and skills spanning more than one stage or year level of the board-approved curriculum were included in the same test. The government sector reported the results of this program extensively. Catholic schools participated in the MAP in 1997.

Languages other than English (LOTE)

Italian, Indonesian and Japanese languages were available to students in Catholic urban primary schools. Three primary schools were involved in the Primary Access to Languages via Satellite (PALS) program. Chinese (Mandarin), French, Indonesian and Japanese languages were available in Catholic urban secondary schools. To support the Indonesian language student exchange program, a group of secondary students travelled to Indonesia. A number of teachers took advantage of study programs to upgrade their language proficiency.

The Catholic sector's funding allocations for National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) was combined with the Northern Territory Department of Education's funding, giving schools access to professional development, advisory and resource support from the Department.

In remote Aboriginal community Catholic schools, the Arrernte, Murrinhpatha and Tiwi languages were taught within the context of the bilingual programs. Bilingual education programs were enriched by the inclusion of the latest resources in computer technology. In the two non-bilingual schools, vernacular language played a significant part in the teaching and learning process.

ESL

Funding from the Commonwealth, under the Targeted Program Literacy component, was used to provide ongoing support for students of non-English speaking backgrounds. Catholic school teachers were involved in professional development and in-service training programs including ESL in the Mainstream and ESL in Anangu schools.

Mathematics

Mathematics continued to be an integral part of the curriculum. All primary schools participated in testing in mathematics under the MAP. Secondary schools were also involved in the Northern Territory testing programs and moderation procedures.

Science

Schools in the Catholic sector viewed science as an important part of the core curriculum. Staff participated in a range of professional development activities offered by the Department of Education and other professional bodies.

Science was a core subject for years T–10. Science teaching in the years T–7 continued and staff used a wider range of teaching strategies focussed on problem solving. They were developing ‘hands on’ science in the years T–2 and worked collaboratively in classroom programs. There were initiatives to implement *Primary Investigations* as the foundation science materials in primary classes.

Some senior students participated in excursions interstate, where they were able to attend science and technology workshops and broaden their experiences of science.

Schools made use of the facilities of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Science Education Centre, Northern Territory Wildlife Park and the Channel Island Field Study Centre.

Technology

Schools made greater use of information technology by investing in computers and presenting submissions under the BGA program. The trend to network computers continued. Primary students had greater access to, and were becoming more proficient in, computer applications. Technology other than computing was taught in the primary classes. Courses in years 8–10 used computers and the Internet to facilitate learning and encouraged students to broaden their experience of the subject matter, as well as gain insight into the futuristic directions of technology.

Gifted and talented

A number of schools were involved in small scale initiatives, at the school level, through the Department of Education’s principal education officer for exceptional children. Two urban primary schools, one middle school campus, two secondary colleges and two remote schools, participated in the initiatives for gifted students.

Students with disabilities

Special education programs focussed on services to improve educational outcomes of students with disabilities. They emphasised inclusive practices by providing therapy and essential support services to enable students to improve their participation in mainstream schooling and gain appropriate educational outcomes.

Professional development was undertaken by all identified coordinators and teachers who were in school-based support roles. The consultant for students with special needs conducted the annual three-day Catholic Education Conference for special education staff and facilitated the monthly special needs professional development network meetings throughout the year. Independent schools were invited to attend these activities including two workshops funded by professional associations and the Department of Education.

Independent sector initiatives in 1997

Notable events reported by schools included a celebration of ANZAC day in West Timor, a successful music program, attendance at the National Reconciliation Convention and the completion of a new hall and worship centre for use as a gym and performance area.

Professional development activities in schools covered a range of curriculum areas, but at the primary school level particular mention was made of social literacy and the First Steps program. Other areas of emphasis were leadership training and best practice in the teaching of Indigenous students.

Developmental activities centred on innovative models of organisation and new programs in the middle years of schooling were implemented in three schools.

Commonwealth funded capital projects and General Recurrent Grants

Government sector

In 1997, the Commonwealth provided \$2.6m under the General Element and contributed towards five capital projects in Northern Territory schools. This funding was used to upgrade existing facilities and relieve overcrowding in schools. All projects commenced in 1997 and will be completed in 1998. The most common type of work undertaken was the construction of permanent facilities to replace transportables and the building of additional classrooms. Extensions to student support areas and library facilities were the other types of projects.

In addition, the Northern Territory received \$12.3m for General Recurrent Grants from the Commonwealth Government.

Catholic sector

In 1997, the Commonwealth provided \$169,272 towards capital projects for Catholic schools. Of the six capital projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed physically and financially during 1997, the major works included refurbishing and upgrading of school buildings and provision of technology support areas.

In addition, the Catholic sector received \$9.4m in General Recurrent Grants from the Commonwealth.

Independent sector

In 1997 the Commonwealth provided \$410,285 towards capital projects through the BGA. Of the five capital projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed physically and financially during 1997, the major works included provision of site services to new schools at Yulara and Palmerston, provision of classrooms and library facilities in Darwin.

Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander element, \$1,610,000 was provided to complete the second stage of an 80-bed male dormitory in Alice Springs.

In addition, the independent sector received \$7.8m in General Recurrent Grants from the Commonwealth.

Focus Areas

School-industry links

Government sector

Development of school-industry links during 1997

The primary tasks were to expand existing programs and develop new ones for implementation in 1998. Significant expansion was achieved through an increase in the number of schools offering existing VET programs and the corresponding increase in the number of students involved in these programs. Expansion also occurred through an increase in the range of programs being offered across existing industry areas.

There were 16 different VET programs offered in 1997 which could be incorporated into Stage 1 of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE) and 415 students were involved in these programs. The industry areas covered by programs were: automotive and allied trades; health and community services; general education (workplace); rural industry (agriculture); tourism and hospitality services; building and construction; business, office and computing; and culture and recreation.



Students at Taminmin High School working with buffalo calves during an agriculture class.

Other VET programs offered were: Training for Retail and Commerce (TRAC) and workplace education/general education programs. Three strands of the TRAC program were offered in Darwin at both Stage 1 and 2 levels, with 36 students participating. The program was also offered in Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs with a small number of participants.

A program based at Alice Springs High School continued to offer students the opportunity to complete their NTCE over three years and included a range of VET modules within the program (expanding, year long, 45 students, 800 hours). The Young Australian Student Access (YASA) program continued to offer Katherine students vocational training and skills in a range of industry areas. The YASA program incorporated a Certificate I in Workplace Education (expanding, year long, 40 students, 800 hours). At St John's College Certificate I and II in General Education were offered to Indigenous students (new, year long, 42 students, 320 hours).

Plans for future years

Largely as a result of 1997 experiences, the following priorities for 1998 have been identified:

- expand the range of programs, especially into industry areas not yet involved in VET in schools;
- extend student accessibility to VET programs in schools;
- develop information about resource needs for VET in schools and the potential for long-term sustainability;
- further develop and formalise the role of the management committees;
- refine the recognition processes while taking the new training packages into account;
- promote VET in schools and inform the public, especially employers, parents and students, about VET programs; and
- develop appropriate databases to support the management and accountability processes.

Outcomes and proposals for improvement

It is expected that 1998 will be a year of considerable growth for VET programs in schools. For the first time, many schools will be delivering VET programs and most cluster groups will be managing joint VET programs. There are further options currently being developed with implementation anticipated later in the year, and more schools are now viewing VET programs as a necessary component of their curriculum offerings. Through professional development activities funded by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the employment of executive officers to assist schools, there has been a large increase in the awareness of VET and in the understanding of VET programs.

Projections

In early 1998, two workplace coordinators will be funded by the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and further appointments are anticipated as new programs become established. The ANTA-funded executive officers have been pro-active in establishing management committees and working with them to seek funding and industry support. This role will continue to be important as more programs and management committees are established and existing committees formalise their structure and role.

There will also be an increase in the number of school-based coordinators who will oversee VET programs within each school.

Differing models of coordination are being encouraged in Darwin and Alice Springs, while other centres with only one high school have developed or will develop a single cooperative arrangement to suit their local needs and situation. In Darwin, the structured workplace learning (SWL) is managed by individual schools for some industry areas and for others it is coordinated across the schools. In several instances the SWL is outsourced to a private provider, including in some cases, the off-the-job component. This approach is proving effective in enabling students from a range of schools to access a program which would otherwise not be available in a population centre as small as Darwin.

Catholic sector

Catholic Education schools form one sector of the VET advisory group which plans and implements new apprenticeships in schools. Planning for this initiative has been done in conjunction with both the Northern Territory Department of Education and Association of Independent Schools.

In remote community locations, Catholic education has sponsored VET courses, moving away from the craft-centred courses of former years. Courses have included literacy and numeracy skills; retail training; driver education; office administration; craft techniques; purchasing/retailing goods; work and health safety.

In one community school, mothers' meetings were held to increase parents' awareness of schooling and courses. These meetings were very well attended. The mothers' meetings have been structured to increase student participation and retention. During 1997, the take up of VET courses was slow.

Future Plans

Future plans are:

- to continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Education and other stakeholders in the provision of VET in three secondary urban schools, community education centres and adult education centres in remote locations;
- to extend the nature and number of VET courses conducted at urban and remote centres; and
- to establish a number of productive links with industry and other employers.

Independent sector

Development of school-industry links during 1997

One independent school began the second phase of a joint agreement with a major mining company to improve quality outcomes, particularly leadership development, for students at the college.

Plans for future years

Independent schools which provide programs for Indigenous students from remote areas initiated a planning process to develop training courses suitable for students and relevant to employment opportunities in their communities. As this planning process is a complex development, it is viewed as a medium-term initiative.

Indigenous students

Government sector

The educational needs of Indigenous students were addressed through strategic and operational plans which were developed by the Department of Education and individual non-government providers.

All providers agreed to use the MCEETYA *National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2001*, as the strategic plan for the Northern Territory. Each provider developed its own operational plan, which addressed the MCEETYA priority areas relevant to its client group.



Indigenous students enjoying 'International Night' at Karama Primary School.

The Department's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Operational Plan 1997–1999*, contains a range of strategies and activities to improve the level of outcomes for Indigenous Territorians.

Highlights during 1997 were:

- extension of access to primary and secondary education through the schools-of-the-air and the secondary correspondence school;
- increased enrolments in Board of Studies-approved secondary bridging courses;
- employment of additional Aboriginal and Islander education workers in urban schools;
- expansion of the Aboriginal resource officer program in both urban and remote schools; and
- commencement of planning to enable Northern Territory system-wide student assessment programs to be implemented in years 3, 5, 7 and 9, in line with the MCEETYA national priority.

Catholic sector

The ESL needs of Indigenous children were widely acknowledged and efforts made to address the English language teaching of these students from the perspective of it being a foreign language for them. Teachers have commenced mapping students' learning on the ESL NT Outcomes Profile. Walking Talking Texts, a locally produced ESL program, was implemented in remote schools. In-service support for teachers using this program was provided both by the Catholic Education Office consultant and Department of Education personnel.

The Department provided two professional development programs, ESL in Mainstream and ESL in Anangu Schools. Catholic school staff in both urban and remote locations have participated in these programs. An office-based

consultant supported English language teaching and learning programs.

In Catholic urban schools, Aboriginal and Islander resource officers were employed to provide classroom support, home/school liaison and cultural perspectives. They assist Indigenous students to achieve equitable outcomes in education.

Professional development programs were conducted to assist teachers relate to teaching Indigenous students. These programs took the form of regional orientation sessions and local workshops.

Catholic schools across Darwin were involved in planning a week of festivities entitled 'Sharing our Cultures' and celebrating the multicultural nature of our schools. Ongoing cross-cultural awareness activities organised by Aboriginal and Islander resource officers and ASSPA committees continued to increase school community awareness and acceptance of the Australian Indigenous community.

The Board of Studies-approved Australian Indigenous Studies curriculum and policy guidelines will be implemented in all Catholic schools over the next two years.

Independent sector

Indigenous students, many of them from remote areas, comprise 24 per cent of enrolments in Independent schools which were the main providers of boarding programs. Many of these students have multiple disadvantages. The needs of these students for appropriate secondary and VET programs represents an ongoing challenge and a major focus of curriculum development.

Nyangatjatjara College, an Aboriginal owned and controlled multi-campus secondary college commenced operations on the basis of an innovative model which is considered to be appropriate for students and the four communities it services.

Students from Kormilda College attended the National Aboriginal Reconciliation Conference. Their attendance resulted in the college hosting a seminar on the issues of reconciliation. Students from other local schools were invited. Around 150 students attended this seminar. Following the seminar, planning commenced for a National Youth Reconciliation Conference which will be hosted by the college in 1998.

Professional development programs offered to teachers included approaches to literacy and numeracy and coping with significant hearing loss amongst Indigenous students.

LOTE

Government sector

The major foci for languages as a key learning area were in the areas of policy, curriculum, assessment and teacher professional development.

An Australian Indigenous Languages Policy was developed, circulated and approved by the Board of Studies. The major purpose of the document was to provide direction to schools on the development and implementation of educational programs for Indigenous languages. In addition, the Northern Territory Policy on Languages and Implementation Guidelines were revised, replacing the first policy published in 1987. The policy sets out principles and goals for languages as a key learning area, the role and responsibility of the Board of Studies and of systems, and implementation of the policy in schools.

The Board-approved courses of study, T-10, for seven languages were in the process of development. The courses reflect current understandings about learning and languages learning, and the place of languages as a key learning area within the broader curriculum.

The Northern Territory Outcomes Profile for Languages was distributed to schools. This profile comprised an overview describing each strand, the outcomes which typify the various levels of achievement, and information for each strand giving examples of how students might demonstrate achievement of an outcome. Work commenced on a third level of the profile, to assist teachers in making judgements about students' achievements in the learning of particular languages.

A review of curriculum time allocation was undertaken. A discussion paper was formulated for consideration by the Board of Studies and circulation for further discussion and consideration by all sections and sectors of the education community.



Students at Driver Primary School participating in an Indonesian lesson.

The Northern Territory School of Languages opened during 1997. The school provided after-hours access to classes in eight different languages. In addition, the school provided professional development support to teachers of languages in schools. The Alice Springs Language Centre also provided support. These programs were supported through Northern Territory and Commonwealth funding.

Professional development for teachers included a program for those using the PALS video and print-based materials which show how the materials can be used effectively to achieve the aims of supporting and developing teachers' language skills and appropriate methodology for enhancing the achievement of learning outcomes by students. Other programs focussed on multi-level, multi-age classrooms, the development of assessment tasks, and cooperative learning principles and strategies. Language study awards were bestowed to teachers to undertake intensive, short term 'in-country' study with a particular focus on the upgrading of language proficiency.

The Northern Territory planned to continue consolidating the achievements made with regard to the strengthening of language programs in schools, the provision of professional development opportunities for language teachers and the expansion of provision of access to the learning of languages.

Table 1. Student enrolments in Indonesian and Japanese language subjects in independent schools, 1997–1999

	1997		1998		1999	
	<i>Indonesian</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Indonesian</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Indonesian</i>	<i>Japanese</i>
Primary	705	107	742	129	790	145
Secondary	701	62	781	83	800	91
Senior Secondary	33	2	50	2	65	8
Total	1,439	171	1,573	214	1,655	244

Source: Association of Independent Schools

Catholic sector

Whilst one primary school was actively developing a comprehensive Indonesian program, generally the developments in LOTE stagnated over the year. The lack of adequate funding and the uncertainty of future funding in this area were a major concern in Catholic primary schools. The future looked bleak and in the context of severely limited and insecure funding, plans for the future appeared to be dismal.

Independent sector

An independent school introduced an accredited course in Indigenous languages at year 11.

The reported shortage in the availability of qualified teachers of Japanese created difficulties in at least one independent school.

Indonesian and Japanese were the focus of Asian languages for independent primary and secondary schools. Table 1 provides details on student enrolments in the independent sector for 1997 with projected student number growth in 1998 and 1999. The figures include two new primary schools which will be offering Asian languages for the first time in 1998. All students of Asian languages also study Asian cultures. Some study of Asian societies and cultures was undertaken outside the language specific programs.

Plans were made to further develop language programs in both independent, secondary and primary schools. Development of programs in Aboriginal languages for Indigenous students continued, particularly those from Aboriginal language backgrounds.

Technology

Government

Significant achievements in the implementation of technology education

The development of the T-10 Technology Outcomes Profile, a simplified version of the nationally developed *Technology—a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, was the catalyst for considerable teacher professional development.

During the development stages of the Outcomes Profile, professional development activities were conducted including Programming and Teaching Technology T-12, together with many faculty discussion groups and profiling activities.



Launch of the Education Network (EdNA) at Dripstone High School.

In many primary schools the teaching of technology provided a new focus for many school activities. From initially being somewhat reluctant to become involved in the teaching of technology, an increasing number of teachers have now recognised the opportunities and benefits that technology can offer. In primary schools, the current trend in the delivery of technology activities was an 'integrated approach', with schools developing programs that engaged students in interesting and varied activities not covered in other learning areas.

To promote technology education and an understanding of the requirements of profiling, a technology teacher resource book has been developed. This publication provided teachers with working examples at each profile level, showing how student activities can be organised to develop technology skills, knowledge and understanding.

Curriculum time allocated to technology

There was no separate time allocated for technology in years T-7. In years 8-10, 80 hours over three years were

allocated to each of home economics and technical studies. All students were required to participate in these courses.

Keyboarding was offered as an elective and computing was integrated across the curriculum. A review of time allocations for all learning areas commenced in late 1997.

Teacher training

The pre-service teacher training program at the Northern Territory University (NTU) was reviewed during 1997. A unit of technology studies has been incorporated into the final semester of the third year of training. The unit is worth ten points and is to be covered in ten hours per week for approximately 13 weeks. The new course will commence in 1998. Meanwhile, other units of study integrated technology (for example, computer software packages for information technology, maths, English, health and physical education, graphic design software for arts). Computer software used varies from standard applications software to multimedia, CD-ROMs, and specific subject-oriented software. In several units students were required to use equipment such as video cameras, scanning devices and digital cameras. In 1997, students were required to use e-mail and NTU Exchange (a computer conferencing facility) to keep in touch from all over the Territory during their practicums.

In future years it is expected that there will be an increase in technology education as all schools are required to report on student attainment in all learning areas. Whole-school approaches in curriculum planning and professional development are encouraged as means to facilitate this process.

Technology education

Significant achievements in technology education were the result of a number of projects funded through the Commonwealth's targeted programs. A considerable proportion of the funds were used to increase the application of technology in schools to address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, particularly those disadvantaged by isolation. They also involved teachers in professional development and ongoing learning in the area of technology education, particularly those teaching in remote locations.

The Department provided a wide range of opportunities for training in the application of computer programs. During 1997, twenty-two employees studied Information Technology at the Graduate Certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor level. Specific programs designed for utilisation

in the classroom such as Create and Communicate and Participative Professional Development were implemented.

The Create and Communicate project aimed to encourage schools to access the Internet. It focussed on research and publication of student writing and interactive communication with other schools in the Northern Territory, interstate and overseas by improving teachers' knowledge, confidence and skills in the area. This project was delivered through a series of workshops.

In 1997, 144 schools participated in the project and 35 remote schools established web-sites. Evidence suggests that students were using the Internet more frequently and efficiently than previously. From activities such as these it could be anticipated that there would be flow-on outcomes such as improved levels of literacy and research skills.

The Participative Professional Development project aimed to establish a web-site containing information, references and professional contacts for teachers, particularly neophytes in the Northern Territory. A web-site called Interactive Teaching Competencies has been established. This web-site has been structured around the 32 competencies outlined in the *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*.

Other projects which received national recognition included the Global Classroom, a regional project coordinated through Katherine High Schools, and the Sustaining Information Technology Development in East Arnhem Schools project in East Arnhem region. Funds were also used to employ regional technology support officers in other regions, specifically to address the needs of isolated schools.

Catholic sector

The most significant achievements in the implementation of technology education in 1997, were the increase in the number of Catholic schools accessing the Internet and the provision of more hardware and local area networks in schools. Teachers continued to teach using information technology as an adjunct. Few teachers were integrating the systems and benefits of information technology into teaching and students learning programs. Teaching and learning about technology occurred in both primary and secondary schools whilst teaching and learning about information technology was conducted mainly in secondary schools. Although there were training opportunities for teachers to gain more knowledge in technology at both regional and local levels, higher levels of participation were needed.

Independent sector

In the Independent sector, it was recognised by schools that the change to information-based approaches and the increasing use of information technology had significant implication for both the skills required by teachers and how they approached their work. This recognition was expected to remain as a professional development focus for some time.

A number of independent schools commenced planning and developing the use of information technology in teaching and learning. The independent schools system participated in an information technology planning exercise for schools education in the Territory.

Geographically isolated students

Government sector

All Northern Territory Department of Education schools outside a 75 kilometre radius of Darwin and Alice Springs are classified as Country Area Schools. In 1997, this included 103 schools with a total enrolment of 13,600 students.

The Department addresses the specific needs of these students through the provision of significant resources which are supplemented by other programs such as the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program and the Commonwealth Targeted and Quality Schooling Programs.

Program Delivery

Specific Purpose Programs

Through the Commonwealth's Targeted and National Priority Programs, supplementary funds were provided to support initiatives conducted at the school, regional and Territory level.

The majority of projects funded in 1997 focussed on improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students.

Funds available under the Country Areas Program were distributed on the basis of submissions from schools and other work units. All schools outside a 75 kilometre radius of Darwin or Alice Springs (including the Alice Springs School of the Air) were eligible to apply.

School communities were encouraged to work collaboratively to improve the delivery of educational services for

students educationally disadvantaged by geographical isolation. A focus on pooling and sharing activities, establishing links with other agencies and groups wherever possible, and on using technology to overcome distance barriers to education, was advocated. Projects were required to be part of a coordinated and integrated school plan.

Among the system-wide projects which utilised funding from the Commonwealth were: Literacy Through Libraries, VISE and First Steps.

Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program

In 1997, the Northern Territory Government spent \$87m on providing education for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander school students. Additional funding of \$9.9m from the



Indigenous students in a science class, Katherine High School.

Commonwealth Government through DEETYA was used to implement additional programs operated by the Northern Territory Department of Education.

The implementation of Indigenous education programs was monitored through a formal appraisal program and the activities of the Department's Aboriginal Education Operational Plan Monitoring Group. The program documented the activities undertaken and the extent to which outcomes were achieved.

During 1997, the following significant outcomes were achieved:

- 37 Indigenous students received the NT Certificate of Education (year 12) award — doubling the 1996 result;
- 18 Indigenous students became eligible for entry to the Northern Territory University — almost three times the 1996 result;
- more than 550 staff participated in the Department's cross-cultural awareness training program;

- 187 Indigenous students were awarded the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC) — an increase of eight per cent from 1996;
- expansion of mentor programs for Indigenous staff; and
- further development of primary assessment instruments to provide feedback on Indigenous students' attainment.

Educational provision and resourcing

Distance education

In 1997, the Northern Territory Open Education Centre provided secondary education and began the introduction of VET for students unable to attend conventional secondary schools. It also continued the provision of programs to extend the curriculum available to students attending other schools. The Centre served students in Aboriginal



Teacher using a radio to communicate with a student in a remote part of the Northern Territory.

communities, mining and fishing camps, on cattle stations, travellers, adults seeking secondary qualifications, primary students seeking extension, students on remand, medically isolated students, and students seeking subjects unavailable at their local school. Students ranged in age from 7 to 70 and were located in all states of Australia as well as overseas in locations as diverse as Rome and Vanuatu.

The Centre offered more than sixty junior courses and seventy senior courses aimed at preparing students for the JSSC and NTCE.

Significant use was made of the recent developments in communications and information technology to increase the reach of programs and develop exciting and interactive learning packages.

The schools-of-the-air in Alice Springs and Katherine continued to provide programs for geographically isolated primary students. Both schools recorded a significant increase in Indigenous student enrolments. The number of

students interacting with their teachers using computers increased during 1997.

Open access schools

In 1997, the Northern Territory School of Languages began its operations. The School provided professional development support to teachers of LOTE throughout the Territory. In addition, after-hours lessons in eight different languages were delivered through the school.

The School of Music took on an additional professional development role in 1997. An advisor was appointed to work with and support teachers of music. The delivery of instrumental music programs by a team of ten specialist teachers continued.

Planning for a Sport, Health and Physical Education School continued in 1997. This additional Open Access School will formally open in 1998.

First Steps

The First Steps Literacy Professional Development project was conducted for the third year and targeted the whole spectrum of literacy and language development so that children were equipped to deal competently with all learning areas and are able to transfer their learning into life situations.

An external evaluation of the project was being finalised. The following outcomes were identified through regular feedback from school-based tutors, principals and parents:

- further development of the understanding that teaching practice has a significant effect on student outcomes and that all children can learn;
- enhanced teacher understanding of children's literacy and language development;
- continued ongoing support for tutors as they implement the program in their own classrooms;
- whole school development and planning through supported collaborative decision making processes; and
- stronger partnerships between parents and the school which contribute to children's literacy development at home as well as in school.

The project will continue in 1998 with training for a further 30 tutors, refresher courses and a range of professional development activities for principals, parents and tutors.

Staff retention and turnover in geographically isolated areas

The key issue of staff retention was considered vital to maintain consistency and continuing development of isolated school communities.

Aboriginalisation of teaching staff at base grade and executive teacher levels was being developed at varying rates in schools across the Northern Territory and represented a key factor in recruitment and retention of suitably qualified local teachers to meet demands.

There were 52 students enrolled in the Advanced Diploma of Teaching course in Batchelor College (the Indigenous teacher training institution). Many of these graduates will commence their teaching career in their home communities.

Remote area incentives

Family Travel Assistance was provided to assist families of employees in remote localities to travel to and from a regional centre once a year in conjunction with an approved professional development program. In 1997, 47 families accessed this scheme, in comparison to nineteen in 1996 and eight in 1995.

Special Remote Study Leave was available to employees in remote localities to take paid study leave for one full semester after teaching for a specific period (a point system, based on the location of the school is in place to determine teacher eligibility to access this program). In 1997, seven teachers received approval to participate in a full semester's paid study leave, and eleven teachers received approval for a year's study leave on half pay.

Approved student status provided reimbursement of Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees, and fares to travel to compulsory residential programs. In 1997, approval was granted to 130 students studying in geographically isolated areas, 26 of these were Indigenous employees.

The Remote Area Teacher Education Salary Scheme enabled Aboriginal employees to undertake part-time employment whilst studying for teacher qualifications. During 1997, six employees accessed this scheme.

A salary incentive program was provided for three-year trained teachers who had undertaken a specified level of professional development to access the four-year salary scale. Another salary incentive program was offered to teachers who began their teaching career in the Northern Territory and had completed two years of service to progress to an additional salary increment. In

1997, the following numbers of employees in remote localities were successful in accessing these incentives: four teachers – Accessing the Four Year Salary Scale; and five teachers – Rapid Incremental Progression for Beginning Teachers.

In addition, under the Australian Full Time Study Leave, two remote locality employees out of a total of eleven were granted an academic semester of paid leave.

Professional development

Priority professional development programs to implement Departmental initiatives and policies were conducted in each regional centre to enable easier access for employees in remote areas to participate in professional development activities.

Programs in 1997 continued to promote the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity Plan, and included such courses as Harassment Contact Officer, Nipping in the Bud, Equity Issues: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities, Cross-cultural Awareness, Performance Management, Managing Inability, Mediation and Competence Based Assessment training.

Teacher training and availability of trained teachers

The Northern Territory Department of Education experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers for the

following subject areas: information technology, mathematics and science. Special efforts were made to recruit teachers in these areas. There was also difficulty in recruiting teachers for remote schools.

Catholic sector

Country Areas Program

The Catholic sector in the Northern Territory encompassed fifteen schools. Of these, five are schools in remote Aboriginal communities and these schools applied for Country Areas funding through the Department of Education. Of the ten remaining schools two were considered remote/rural and received funding through the Catholic Education Council. The schools' education programs addressed educational disadvantage according to the guidelines. The priority areas identified for Commonwealth funding in 1997 sought to provide professional development for staff in the delivery of the Northern Territory Board of Studies curriculum and literacy initiatives, focussed on the First Steps literacy program.

The school communities faced many challenges in being geographically isolated from a major city. A prime issue was staffing. There was a frequent and high turnover of staff, not only at the beginning of a term, semester or year but also throughout the year, independent of term breaks. The majority of staff did not come from the Territory.