

Chapter 12

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Introduction

The Northern Territory (NT), with a population of 189,991 and land area of 1,348,000 square kilometres, has a population density of approximately 14 persons per 100 square kilometres. Almost 25 per cent of the population are of school age, and of these, 35 per cent are Indigenous students. Educational services are provided to a diverse multicultural and multilingual population, many living in remote centres which are accessible only by air or sea or which are often not accessible during the wet season from October to March. More than half the schools and a quarter of the students are located in remote areas with varying degrees of access disadvantage.

The location and social diversity of the population imposes exceptional access and cost disabilities. Students are widely dispersed across the NT, necessitating many small schools which are expensive to maintain and service. Additional costs in curriculum and language support staff and resources are incurred due to the diverse languages and cultures of the student body.

The NT population is highly mobile. Many Indigenous Territorians move for a variety of reasons, including traditional cultural commitments. Non-Indigenous residents are also very mobile, mainly due to availability of employment opportunities, children's educational needs or family ties. The teaching population is also highly mobile: teachers come from all States of Australia and overseas, often only staying for a short time (especially in the isolated communities).

There are more than 50 Indigenous languages and over 60 foreign languages spoken by students. One-third of Territorians aged 5–17 years speak a language other than English as their first language. Education is currently provided in 34 languages other than English in 21 bilingual schools.

Rural and remote schools are predominantly Indigenous, although schools in urban areas also have significant

Indigenous enrolments, most 10–30 per cent but, in some cases, as high as 75 per cent. Many Indigenous students suffer from poor health, including otitis media, and come from families of low socioeconomic status who are limited in their capacity to support their children's education.

The participation rate for Indigenous students is similar to that of non-Indigenous students at the primary level, but unacceptably low at the secondary level. Indigenous attendance rates for students from non-urban schools are consistently 13–16 per cent lower than those of Indigenous students from urban schools.

As a result of the Education Review conducted during 1998, significant changes to the structure of the Northern Territory Department of Education (NTDE) were recommended. One of the major recommendations was to refocus policy and program delivery to Aboriginal students through the establishment of an Aboriginal Education Branch, with the aim of providing a more structured approach to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for these students.

Overview

Government sector

In 1998, there were 149 government schools with 28,544 full-time students. This represents 77.7 per cent of all school enrolments.

The core business of education in the NT is to deliver high-quality, relevant student learning in schools that provide a safe, non-threatening environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The Education Review recommended a flatter management structure and the redirection of all

possible resources to schools to ensure the optimisation of quality outcomes for students. This will be implemented early in 1999. The review also led to changes in the culture to facilitate and value the education of children and the work of

teachers while recognising that parents are essential partners in education.

The department's plan identifies objectives relating to educational outcomes, access to education services, client focus and resource management. Consequently, priorities for targeted programs are:

- improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students in the target groups, with particular emphasis on the early years
- incorporating strategies to address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students in whole-school planning
- improving student attendance, participation and retention
- providing appropriate technology to address the specific needs of students disadvantaged by isolation
- providing professional development initiatives for teachers which will improve the delivery of programs to target groups
- encouraging active parent/community/interagency involvement in programs and initiatives to achieve optimal outcomes for students in the target groups.

Catholic sector

In 1998, there were nine Catholic urban schools (Darwin and Alice Springs), one rural school (Katherine) and five remote schools. Of the urban and rural schools, two were secondary, seven were primary and one offered both secondary and primary schooling. Homeland centre schools also became operational at Woodykupiidiya near the St Francis Xavier Daly River School and Wurankuwu on Bathurst Island.

The major objectives for schooling in the Catholic sector were to:

- prepare students for full lives as active Christian members of society, provide an effective educational environment, foster positive human relationships, encourage students to develop self-esteem and a sense of social responsibility and respond to parents' requests regarding educational provision for their children
- improve the participation, retention and achievement of all students, including Indigenous students; those with physical disabilities, low socioeconomic status and language difficulties; and those living in geographically isolated areas
- support teachers through professional development activities and provide students with the basic skills of

literacy and numeracy, an appreciation of creative arts, and a framework which provides a reference for judgement in matters of ethics and morality

- provide schools with facilities which meet the educational needs of Indigenous people and support them in their move towards self-determination while ensuring cultural integrity, and a full range of educational opportunities for all students T-12 within the Catholic education system, as well as adult education courses.

Independent sector

In 1998, there were 3,181 full-time students enrolled in 15 independent schools in the Northern Territory. This represented 8.7 per cent of student enrolments. The sector comprised eight primary schools, four secondary schools (all of which offer boarding facilities) and three schools offering both primary and secondary education. Indigenous students constituted 26 per cent of the student population. Three schools catered only for Indigenous students and three others included specialist Indigenous education programs and resources.

The Association of Independent Schools NT (AISNT) revised its articles of association and management structure to better reflect its composition and the diverse needs of the schools in a growing sector. Schools and AISNT also responded to NT government initiatives to review the regulations under the Education Act which govern the operation of non-government schools. This included detailed consideration of accountability processes.

The goals of independent schools are consistent with the national goals for schooling. Individual schools identified specific goals and emphases related to the needs and values of their school community. These specific goals were related particularly to social, cultural and moral education and are reflected in the ethos of individual schools.

Independent schools had a wide variety of key objectives in 1998, including:

- the appointment of key staff
- provision of professional development for teaching staff
- improvement of student literacy and numeracy skills
- curriculum review and development.

Major developments

Government sector

The Education Review

During 1998, the NT government education sector undertook a major review of its structure and functions, with a particular focus on improving student outcomes in classrooms. Included in the terms of reference were to:

- identify ways through which the quality of education and educational outcomes in the NT could be optimised
- identify ways in which existing resources could be allocated to ensure the optimisation of quality outcomes for students
- recommend ways to ensure that schools have an enhanced role in the development of educational policies and future directions.

The recommendations included increasing teaching and administrative staff in some primary schools, decreasing office-based staff to achieve a flatter structure, and greater coordination of curriculum-related services. Other significant recommendations of the review included the redirection of the resources currently allocated to bilingual education programs to enhance English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and to refocus Indigenous education policy and program delivery to ensure a more consistent and structured approach to improving English literacy and numeracy levels for Indigenous students.

The Literacy and Numeracy Plan

The 1998 Northern Territory Literacy and Numeracy Plan, a collaborative effort involving government, Catholic and independent education sectors, was completed. The plan provides an outline of the programs that are already in place to support schools and ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve the national goals for literacy and numeracy. A task group identified gaps in the provision of support and initiated a variety of intervention projects in primary and secondary schools designed to increase parent participation. The task group also trialled a selection of assessment packages to assess students' skills when they begin school.

English as a second language

The Commonwealth ESL for Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ILSS) program was implemented, with 752 students enrolled. The program consists of three elements:

- the employment of additional teachers to assist in the development and teaching of effective oral English programs
- the provision of cash grants to schools to cover the cost of additional resources, both human and material, to support the program
- the provision of professional development for teachers involved.

Schools were responsible for providing students with effective ESL programs focussing on the development of oral English, and for profiling students on the NT ESL Outcomes Profile, the equivalent of the National ESL Scales.

Reporting student achievement

System-wide implementation of outcomes profiling was commenced in the NT after four years of planning and trialling. For the first time, schools reported to parents on the basis of the standards described in the NT Outcomes Profiles, which are closely aligned to the nationally developed profiles. Primary schools reported on English/ESL or mathematics, while secondary schools reported on English/ESL, mathematics, science and one other learning area.

Developments in Territory-wide testing included:

- changes in the test cohorts from years 4 and 6 to years 3 and 5
- changes in the time of testing from May to October
- inclusion of items to measure performance on the benchmarks for reading and mathematics
- introduction of a common writing task to assess the writing and spelling benchmarks.

These changes were made to enable performance of years 3 and 5 students to be reported from 1998 data. Students in Indigenous schools were included for assessment against the benchmarks for the first time: these were 8-year olds and 10-year-olds who had not been included in Territory-wide testing in the past.

Key competencies

The *Key Competencies Across the Curriculum* chart was developed. The NT Board of Studies (NTBOS) recognised the need for and usefulness to employers of a reporting system which could relate the key competencies to the skills and understandings attained by students through the Board Approved Curriculum: T-10, and to competencies attained through NT Certificate of Education (NTCE) studies. All key

competencies attainable in Stage 1 (year 11) NTBOS courses were mapped, and the most appropriate performance level identified. Those identified as achievable through the successful completion of each course were indicated on the chart to enable employers to see the relationship between the key competency levels and the courses studied by the student.

Australian Business Week

The Australian Business Week Program was implemented. Students were also required to present an oral and written report that included an evaluation of the program. Students who successfully completed the full program were able to apply for one unit of credit towards Stage 1 (year 11) of the NTCE.

Boys and literacy

The Boys and Literacy in the Middle Years of Schooling project was commenced. This project was designed to unravel some of the complex issues impacting on boys' engagement with and achievement in literacy tasks. Boys' concepts of masculinity and how they may impact on the subject English were also addressed. The document *Challenging the Boys* was produced, describing the approaches developed by teachers and schools to address some of these issues, and reflecting the diversity of innovative thinking and practice in NT schools.

Aboriginal and Islander Aspirations Program

The first Territory Challenge for students involved in the Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program was held in Darwin in August 1998. Forty students representing secondary schools from across the Territory participated in the event. The challenge consisted of student presentations on a range of Indigenous issues such as reconciliation, racism and land rights. Most students worked in teams to produce solutions to problems in the form of dramatic performances, while some presented individual oral

presentations. Other events included theatre sports, a quiz and a careers presentation by representatives of various organisations, including the Northern Territory University, industry groups and other employers. Representative teams from the NT were chosen to participate in the Queensland State Challenge in September 1998. They performed extremely well, coming third and fifth in a field of 85 teams.

International Services

The objective of International Services Branch is to encourage and facilitate the internationalisation of the NTDE through focussing overseas attention on educational services available in the NT. This is achieved by supporting language and culture programs in schools and educational institutions on- and offshore, and by coordinating the department's involvement in projects and programs which promote its ability to deliver fee-paying services throughout the Asian region.

Highlights for International Services included the hosting of a guest teacher from Osaka, a total of eleven teacher and ten student international exchanges, eight Japanese study tours, and the ASEAN/Asian Symposium on Educational Management and Leadership. The last was held in Darwin and included participants from Malaysia, Fiji, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand.

The NTDE was also granted special status by the Commonwealth government in 1998 as a Pre-Qualified Institution for the purpose of recruiting fee-paying students from China. This means the department has accepted the responsibility, on a trial basis, to assess the bona fides of Chinese applicants for visas to study in the NT. This was a task previously done by the Australian Embassy.

Catholic sector

During 1998, the Catholic education sector was involved with:

- the National Catholic Education Commission statement on reconciliation
- planning for new schools
- finalising a strategic plan for Catholic education in the Diocese of Darwin 1998–2001
- the development and implementation of the NT Literacy and Numeracy Plan
- the refurbishment of flood-damaged schools
- the Information Technology project.

There was an increase in the number of Indigenous students undertaking courses for secondary-age students, including intensive English, foundation studies and general studies, as well as secondary studies by correspondence and face-to-face teaching. At one community school the introduction of vocational education and training (VET) studies enabled students of school age and older who were not attending school to access courses and establish links to work opportunities in the community. A trial continued in one

community to provide mainstream secondary face-to-face teaching and courses to Indigenous students in two remote community schools. In two schools Indigenous Education Units were phased out.

The Catholic Education Council became the executive body for Catholic education in the Territory. While the Catholic Education Office (CEO) directs the operations in the sector, schools operate with assistance from school boards and/or other parent organisations. Community schools continued to move towards the establishment of school boards and the Indigenous Education Standing Committee was set up. Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness committees, parents and Aboriginal and Islander Resource Officers collaborated with school staff in accepting responsibility for school initiatives.

Trainee teachers accessed studies through Deakin University in Victoria. Teachers at Port Keats were involved in a new initiative: courses using distance mode from the Broome Campus of the University of Notre Dame Australia. Mentor programs for those moving into teaching and administrative positions also continued in 1998.

Indigenous Education Program funding 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 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 the group and encouraged the involvement of Indigenous people in school programs. Resource officers worked in collaboration with other stakeholders in the planning and implementation of cultural activities in Darwin Catholic urban schools.

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

Catholic schools worked closely with NTDE support personnel to implement cross-curriculum initiatives which helped to contribute to the social objectives of schooling. Schools were involved in the Drugs Awareness Resistance Education program, programs for the gifted and talented, the Asia in Schools project, civics and citizenship education, and the middle schooling project. Catholic schools provided educational support services for a range of students with

disabilities. They were involved in programs identifying violence in schools and worked to strengthen positive learning environments for all students. VET programs achieved more prominence in schools.

The schools contributed to student awareness and learning of various social objectives by providing extensive co-curricular programs to develop individual students' social abilities and encourage civic involvement. Schools across Darwin were also involved in planning a week of festivities focussing on the cultural diversity of the Territory.

Independent sector

One new independent primary school opened in 1998 and two existing primary schools offered year 8 classes for the first time as part of the development of middle school programs. One other K–12 school was restructured internally to provide a better middle school environment and an Indigenous education learning centre catering for students from remote communities.

The independent schools sector participated in the development of the joint-sector NT Literacy and Numeracy Plan and two schools offered courses under the ESL ILSS program for the first time. All schools with secondary students introduced programs in vocational education as part of their secondary provision.

In July 1998, Kormilda College hosted the Forum for the Future: National Youth Reconciliation Convention. Three hundred and thirty youth delegates from eighty schools representing every State and Territory in Australia attended the convention. The Youth Charter for Reconciliation was made available via the college's homepage to schools and students throughout Australia.

Focus areas

Government sector

Literacy outcomes for students

Programs such as Parents as Teachers, First Steps and Walking Talking Texts in conjunction with a range of services and both regional and school-based projects provided support for students identified as experiencing difficulties in achieving acceptable literacy standards. Potentially suitable intervention programs for primary and secondary 'at risk' students were researched and trials commenced.

Other programs, including the ESL Teacher Development Program, First Steps, Early Childhood Programs for

Indigenous Children and other school-based projects provided professional development to enhance teachers' literacy teaching and assessment skills. Additional professional development was available through the Northern Territory Literacy and Numeracy Support Program.

The instrument used for assessment of primary students at years 3 and 5 against the benchmarks was the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP), which incorporated a common writing task as part of the moderation element. Once a year schools are required to report to parents on students' attainments on the outcomes profiles.

The collaborative model was adopted to ensure comparable national reporting of student achievement against the benchmarks. It involved three main tasks: placing items from State and Territory assessment instruments onto common scales; locating the defined national benchmarks on these common scales; and linking the benchmark locations back to States' and Territories' own achievement scales.

All students in years 3 and 5 in urban schools and all students aged 8 and 10 in non-urban Indigenous schools were assessed against the benchmarks in reading, writing, spelling and numeracy in 1998. They were required to sit a reading comprehension test, a mathematics test and a common writing task in the MAP. Benchmark items were incorporated in the tests for reading and numeracy. A common writing task was introduced for the first time to assess performance against the writing benchmark. Spelling was assessed through writing.

ESL students were identified as those whose 'language background is other than English and whose knowledge of English is limited to such an extent that she or he requires extra assistance in learning English and coping with English language demands across the curriculum'. In reporting their performance, the data was broken down into ESL Indigenous, ESL non-Indigenous and non-ESL students to obtain a more accurate picture of performance by each of the sub-groups.

Students were exempted from the tests if they were deemed to be likely to obtain results of zero or near zero. Those exempted were deemed not to have achieved the benchmarks and teachers were asked to complete a checklist of their capabilities.

Year 10 students were assessed in English and mathematics through the year 10 Assessment Program, which comprises an externally moderated school assessed component contributing 70 per cent of the overall final grade, and an examination or what is known as the Common Instrument of Assessment worth 30 per cent. These components are combined to provide

each student with a final grade in English and mathematics using the A to E scale for the Junior Secondary Studies Certificate.

Citizenship

Twelve schools assisted Curriculum Corporation in evaluating its curriculum support materials for Australian schools. While these materials were matched to Territory curriculum documentation, no specific materials for civics were developed. However, the social education course of study T-10 was reconfigured to accommodate civics and citizenship more readily and to enable explicit teaching about cultural diversity, anti-racism and parliamentary education. Further, a professional development proposal for 1999-2000 was designed and the Northern Territory University used Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs funds to develop a course, Educating for Citizenship, for interested teachers.

One hundred and nine schools across the Territory participated in student citizen award activities organised by the Australia Day Committee (NT), which culminated in awards to winners on Australia Day 1999. Primary and secondary teachers and students also participated in a number of other activities including a combined Australian Electoral Commission and Parliamentary Education Office project.

The arts

Northern Territory Board of Studies arts curriculum documents were completed and distributed to all NT schools. These included the years 7-10 *Performing and Visual Arts Learning Area Statement* and *Course of Study*. Twenty-nine Stage 1 accredited performing and visual arts courses were made available to all secondary schools.

Vocational education and training

VET programs were available to all students enrolled in senior secondary education in the NT. Thirty-eight programs, compared with 16 for 1997, were offered in a range of industry areas. These areas included: retail; automotive; engineering; tourism; hospitality; business, office and computing; building and construction; rural skills and horticulture; culture and recreation; electro technology; local government; and health and community services. The 1,156 students who participated in these programs have satisfied the requirements of Stage 1 NTCE.

Provision for socioeconomically disadvantaged students

Commonwealth Targeted Programmes funding enabled initiatives in Literacy, Special Education – School Support and Country Areas programs to be implemented. The funds available through the Literacy program were distributed to school, region, and system-wide projects to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy for educationally disadvantaged students. The School Support funds were combined with the NTDE funding provided for students with disabilities. Country Areas program funding continued to be distributed using the Griffith Service Access Frame. However, for the first time, all eligible schools received funding as a cash grant.

The NTDE acted as an agent for the distribution of Commonwealth Non-Government Centre Support program funds and monitored projects. These funds were combined with those made as a joint payment from the Commonwealth to the NTDE for Special Education – School Support and made available to schools – government, Catholic and independent – and to non-government centres for appropriate projects on a submission basis.

The priorities for targeted programs were established by consultation with a broad range of stakeholders through the various committees and are in line with NT and Commonwealth objectives for Targeted and Quality Schooling Programs.

Catholic sector

Literacy outcomes for students

The Catholic education sector worked closely with the NTDE on assessment and reporting initiatives to address the national literacy goals. Students took part in the MAP at years 3 and 5 and NTBOS moderation at secondary level. The Catholic sector continued to liaise with the other two sectors in the move to comprehensive assessment and reporting against the year 3 and 5 benchmarks.

There were initiatives to consolidate and extend good practice and develop intervention strategies in the early years of schooling to identify children's literacy needs and address them appropriately. Students identified with special needs were also given support to improve their literacy outcomes.

All Catholic urban primary schools were involved in the First Steps program, which provided professional development for teachers and promoted parental involvement in the learning process. The CEO consultant conducted network meetings and worked in schools on request.

The basis of the English literacy program in remote schools continued to be Walking Talking Texts, a program for students whose first language is not English. The program was supported by the CEO and personnel from the NTDE. Professional development workshops and on-site support were also provided for teachers using this program.

Catholic school teachers were involved in other professional development and in-service programs, including ESL in the Mainstream and ESL in Anangu schools. The CEO conducted its annual three-day conference for special education staff and facilitated the monthly special needs professional development network meetings throughout the school year. Independent schools were invited to attend both the conference and the meetings.

The arts

The arts include the areas of the visual and performing arts, which schools accessed in a comprehensive way, the focus being on student-centred learning. In several community schools art teachers produced programs which incorporated traditional arts and crafts. Community members assisted students with screen printing, batik and wood carving. Many Catholic schools developed relevant and integrated programs to ensure that the arts were adequately covered in the overall curriculum.

Teaching and learning in the arts involved students in local community projects as well as public performance. Students also attended performances put on for public entertainment as part of the extended curriculum. Catholic schools in Alice Springs and Katherine worked with the NTDE School of Music in developing instrumental music programs in their schools, an initiative that involved sharing teachers across sectors.

Civics

Civics and Citizenship resource materials developed by Curriculum Corporation were distributed to schools, which identified ways in which they could be implemented within the curriculum.

A number of Catholic schools visited Parliament House in Canberra and the NT. Other related activities included charity work. After the Katherine and Daly River flood, schools collected school materials and engaged in fundraising to support the affected schools. These initiatives involved cross-sector activities and included supporting victims of the Papua New Guinea tidal wave and a hurricane. Several schools 'adopted a student' – a St Vincent de Paul initiative – and a

number of schools conducted cross-cultural camps and visited remote Aboriginal community schools where they shared activities. Catholic schools also continued to further develop their anti-racism programs.

Vocational education and training

VET programs became available for all senior secondary students. Catholic schools worked in conjunction with both the NTDE and the Association of Independent Schools on the VET Advisory Group.

At remote community locations, Catholic education continued to sponsor VET courses through Community Education Centres and Adult Education Centres. Courses included literacy and numeracy skills; retail training; driver education; office administration; craft techniques; purchasing/ retailing goods; and work health and safety.

Socioeconomic disadvantage

Services for supporting targeted students continued in both urban and rural schools. Through the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy, Special Education – School Support and Country Areas programs, the Catholic Education Council was able to implement appropriate initiatives. The priorities they identified were those with an emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy levels. Schools submitted proposals to improve the learning outcomes of the targeted students under the different components and suitable projects were identified by an advisory committee made up of professional educators and community members. Some funds for students with significant levels of disability were accessed through a trisectoral committee. Catholic schools in remote communities continued to have access to initiatives funded by these programs through the NTDE.

Independent sector

Literacy outcomes for students

Independent schools participated in the development of a joint sector NT Literacy and Numeracy Plan and its ongoing review. They also participated in the MAP and other assessment mechanisms sponsored by the NTBOS. Teachers in independent schools participated in joint-sector professional development activities, including one for literacy that was funded through the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

Independent schools participated in a range of joint-sector assessment activities, including the development and trialling of materials for testing and reporting student achievement.

Specific initiatives undertaken in 1998 included implementation of the ‘profiling’ system in language, accessing specific support and programs for the oral component of the literacy goal in accordance with the ILSS program, implementing profiling for oral literacy, and planning for future initiatives in literacy that focussed on teacher training, workshops, whole-school literacy approaches and the appointment of specialist staff.

The arts

The arts was an important curriculum focus for independent schools, with many schools offering arts activities as part of additional developmental and extension programs. Arts-related activities were considered important in the teaching of cultures and particularly in cultural expression and enrichment for Indigenous students.

Independent schools offered their students a varied program of arts activities in 1998, with the focus on performing and visual arts. In the performing arts, students took part in dance programs, including contemporary Indigenous dance and music programs involving instruments such as didgeridoos, drums, guitars and recorders as well as orchestral instruments. Schools acquired new musical instruments and staged major events or performances. Students used visual arts activities for literacy and numeracy training. Other activities reported by schools included: the employment of outside expertise, such as local artists; displays; participation in a youth expo; and implementation of a program in Western Desert art.

Many schools had specific links with parents or church and community groups. Parents taught sewing skills and musical instruments (notably the didgeridoo) and students were involved in community arts projects.

Arts education was extended in many schools, and included plans to link work placements to local artists, develop facilities within the school, extend existing programs, develop links with local radio and television stations, and establish or extend artist-in-residence programs.

Civics

Many independent schools incorporated their teaching of citizenship with other studies, including social studies, Christian education, science, health and the environment and English literacy programs.

Initiatives and activities included: a focus on multicultural studies and, in particular, Indigenous culture and language; anti-racism activities and studies of reconciliation issues;

involvement in a range of charities and community activities; and parliamentary education in the classroom and through studies of current events such as the 1998 Federal elections. Another successful initiative was the Forum for the Future: National Youth Reconciliation Convention.

Ten independent schools participated in student citizen award activities organised by the Australia Day Council (NT) culminating in awards to winners on Australia Day, 1999.

Schools surveyed reported positive outcomes as a result of these programs and activities, including; increased awareness of the role of local government, positive responses to students with special needs enrolled in the school, greater awareness of cultural diversity, and increased awareness of Australia as part of a global community.

Vocational education and training

Independent schools participated in joint-sector arrangements to plan and manage vocational education. Initiatives included: establishing links with local colleges and employment services to identify work placements and offer necessary training; developing an employment strategy; obtaining funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) to develop a VET curriculum; and planning traineeships in areas such as office skills and teaching assistant skills. Planning for future activities included seeking work placements for students at risk of leaving school early with low literacy/numeracy skills, staff development and developing a skills centre.

During 1998, the Catholic and independent schools sectors developed a pilot project to improve school–industry and school–employment links in two schools in the same area. One focus of this project, which has been funded under the Commonwealth’s School to Work program, will be to develop and improve employment pathways for students in the participating schools.

Socioeconomic disadvantage

The independent sector used information on the socioeconomic status of its schools from the NTDE analysis. The most socioeconomically disadvantaged students were Indigenous students from rural communities or town camps. Individual students and families were also identified at the school level, sometimes by their difficulty in paying fees. In some independent schools the whole student population was identified as being disadvantaged; that is, Indigenous, geographically isolated, or from communities with inadequate

housing, high unemployment and high levels of poverty and social dislocation.

Schools offered socioeconomically disadvantaged students specific services, such as financial support for cultural programs and excursions via the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness committees. DETYA support programs such as the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme and the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme were used to provide additional tuition and fund excursions. Schools also provided additional assistance from their own recurrent funding resources or from fundraising activities.

Commonwealth-funded capital projects

Government sector

In 1998, the Commonwealth provided \$2.69 million under the General element and contributed to five capital projects in schools. This funding was used to upgrade existing facilities and relieve overcrowding in schools. All projects commenced in 1998 and will be completed in 1999. The most common type of work undertaken was the construction of permanent facilities and the building of additional classrooms. Extensions to student support areas and library facilities were also undertaken.

All projects were in the NT electorate and were subject to Indigenous employment and training opportunities. All projects were managed by their respective school councils. The contact was the chairperson, care of each school (or, as an alternative, the school principal).

In addition, the NT received \$13,089,709 in general recurrent grants from the Commonwealth government.

Non-government schools

Non-government schools received \$694,909 for 1998 projects. From that sum \$584,909 was allocated for General element projects and \$110,000 from accumulated interest from Block Grant Authority funds. There was an additional \$60,280 provided for administration costs incurred by the authority.

Capital projects were completed in seven Catholic schools and three independent schools. Major works included refurbishing and upgrading of school buildings and the provision or extension of student support areas.

In addition, the Catholic sector received \$10,670,790 in general recurrent grants from the Commonwealth and the independent sector received \$9,066,660.