The Chief Minister must immediately retract his claim that Indigenous students who fail to attend school are dragging down NAPLAN results in Territory schools.

And while he’s at it, Paul Henderson should set about addressing issues within Territory schools instead of trying to find scapegoats.

Deputy Opposition Leader, Kezia Purick, said in response to the release of figures showing not one Territory school reached the national average in all curriculum areas assessed by NAPLAN, the Chief Minister laid the blame on Indigenous students.

Indigenous kids are missing school and that is dragging down the results right across the system. That is how it is.

But documents released after a Freedom of Information request by the Country Liberals show that Top End schools with low Indigenous attendance actually performed best in the NAPLAN tests.

“For instance the Moil School, which was among the best-performed primary schools in Darwin, had Indigenous attendance rates of just under 80%,” Ms Purick said.

“Darwin Middle School, which also did well when compared with other schools, had an Indigenous attendance rate of 72.6%.

“Paul Henderson’s assertion that Indigenous kids are weighing down education outcomes is nonsense, and he should offer a full retraction.

“He’s trying to turn Indigenous students into scapegoats for his Government’s failings to deliver education outcomes.”

Ms Purick said Labor should immediately look at implementing reforms announced last month by the Country Liberals that would see $27million a year spent on a range of initiatives including classroom tutors, after school literacy and numeracy programs, multi-disciplinary behavioural management teams and additional support for school councils.

“The Henderson Government should stop blaming students for Labor’s education failings and develop policies that actually tackle problems within the system.”

Further comment: Kezia Purick 0407 035 992