The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2013 National Summary Report has shown the scale of the challenge the Territory faces in lifting education standards.

The Northern Territory is widely regarded as a unique jurisdiction with unique issues. Twenty three per cent of the population in the Territory is under the age of 15 with close to half of our young people living in remote and very remote areas.

The Australian Early Development Index shows that almost 24 per cent of young Territorians are developmentally vulnerable in two or more areas.

Minister for Education, Peter Chandler, said it is for these reasons the Northern Territory is taking a new approach and heavily investing in the early years through many avenues including reducing the student-teacher ratio from 22:1 to 20:1.

“"We cannot ignore the best research that says investing in the early years sets students up for a better education as they move through the system," Mr Chander said.

“The NAPLAN Summary Report released today has reassured me of the importance of focusing on the key learning areas like reading, writing and numeracy, especially in the early years.

“The areas of writing, including grammar and punctuation, are particularly difficult to ‘catch-up’ on if issues are not dealt with early. That is certainly evident with the results released today with years seven and nine not improving over a five year period.

“If there are significant backward trends in areas over a five year period it would be insane not to change the way we do things. I won’t just sit there and watch convention dictate how we run our schools.

“We have seen some encouraging improvement over the last twelve months in the areas of reading and numeracy with some notable gains for year three and five students. It is important to continue this focus and build a solid foundation that will ensure this improvement will flow through to the senior years.”

The NAPLAN 2013 Summary Report will be available on their website today: http://www.nap.edu.au/results-and-reports/national-reports.html

The Summary Report represents preliminary results based on data received from schools; a full and finalised report is expected to be released in December and available through the MySchools website in March.

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