The Territory Government has urged parents and teachers to arm themselves with the facts about its education reforms which are squarely aimed at improving student outcomes.

"Whilst there is some confusion about the Government’s plans, I want parents and teachers to understand that the education of children, and properly preparing them for their future, are our clear priorities in these reforms," Education Minister Peter Chandler said.

"It is crucial that these reforms are put in perspective.

"Over the past five years the number of frontline staff in schools has increased by 488, including 288 teachers. There has been an increase of 199 teachers in the past year alone.

"Despite these staffing increases, student educational outcomes have not significantly improved.

"The NT President of the Australian Education Union accepted this reality when he was quoted in the NT News on September 26 as saying the latest NAPLAN test results showed the NT had the lowest scores in the country.

"This measure alone demands that we do something different to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We cannot keep repeating the mistakes of the past and expect a different result.

"The government accepts that influences such as social media are presenting teachers with increasing challenges in engaging students, but clearly just hiring more teachers has not been an effective response.

"We need to work together to improve what is delivered in the classroom, as well as reviewing the support that is needed around the classroom to engage students and deliver improved outcomes.

"The Government’s reforms will result in additional teachers, and therefore smaller class sizes, in the early years of school. This is designed to better engage children in learning at the beginning of their school life so that they remain engaged right throughout their senior years.

"Importantly the number of teachers employed per student in each of our schools after the reforms will remain equivalent to the best in the country.

"The net loss of teaching positions across the Territory will be 35 which will be largely absorbed through natural attrition.

"No permanent teacher will lose their job under the changes but some short term contracts will not be renewed."
No teacher will be asked to re-apply for their job but some teachers might have to shift to a different subject area and appropriate support to facilitate this will provided.

Some support staff will be transferred out of head office in Darwin and moved closer to the schools that they support. This is also designed to give schools, teachers, and most importantly students, ready access to what they need.

“It is crucial that parents understand that these education reforms are in no way connected to the current teacher wage offer that is under negotiation.

“Operational matters, such as the maximum face-to-face teaching times of 4 hours and 20 minutes per day for Middle and Senior School teachers, are not involved in the pay talks. Nor are there any proposals to vary the hours of work for teachers.

“These are matters that are negotiated between teachers, schools and the government completely separate from the wage negotiations.

“These reforms are about improving the educational outcomes achieved by our school children – an aspiration I’m sure all Territory parents and teachers share.

“I urge people to accept that the time has come for a new approach and to support our efforts to engage students in their education in the early years, when it matters most.”

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