NEW FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Martin Government today announced a major new focus on Indigenous education and training.

Fifteen remote Indigenous communities will be invited to sign contracts with the Territory Government to better engage parents and other community members in their children’s education, Minister for Employment, Education and Training Syd Stirling told Parliament today.

“Education and training contracts are one element of a plan that will see the Martin Government directing resources to major remote communities, re-introducing a vigorous bilingual education program and completely revamping the Territory’s distance education system,” Mr Stirling said.

“Connecting each community, its school and the Government into a close working relationship focused on improving education and training outcomes will lead to the development of a real and lasting education culture in these communities.

“Developing that culture will change the face of these communities and the Territory. It will mean people leaving school literate, numerate and job ready.”

The Territory’s 15 Community Education Centres, based in the Territory’s larger remote communities, will be targeted. They are: Alekerange, Angurugu, Borroloola, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalunya, Kalkaringi, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Ngkurr, Shepherdson College, Numbulwar, Yirrkala and Yuendumu.

As part of the community engagement process, Government will support a range of initiatives at each of the 15 CECs, including:

- providing effective education from pre-school through to senior secondary at each of the Territory’s 15 Community Education Centres;
- revitalising bi-lingual education;
- improving delivery of Homelands Education with better infrastructure, teaching and training resources;
- negotiating with communities a more flexible approach to the structure of the school year and school day taking into account seasonal and cultural realities eg attendance at ceremonies
- providing greater flexibility around staff-student formulas, including taking a shared approach to resources;
- improving access to Vocational Education and Training, with more active involvement of Indigenous communities in decision making about employment pathways and programs; and
- establishing clear employment and training pathways that will see Indigenous people gain full qualifications and become teachers and school administrators.
Mr Stirling said the efforts of Government and schools over the past few years had seen more Indigenous children accessing pre-school in remote communities; improvements in literacy and numeracy results; and an increase in the number of remote Indigenous students engaging in secondary education and graduating from Year 12.

“At this stage, our gains can be considered tentative. It will require our ongoing and unrelenting attention if we are to see sustained and strong improvement,” he said.

“As well as enhancing our focus on our larger remote communities and their CECs, we will continue the roll out of a range of initiatives already underway to remote communities.

Our overarching goals are:

- developing an education culture by building partnerships between local communities, schools and training facilities
- continuing to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes
- providing access to quality education and training coupled with proper resourcing
- building a comprehensive and viable Vocational Education and Training system in the communities

“Over time it is our intention to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes,” Mr Stirling said.

“Quality education and training are the cornerstones to building strong Indigenous communities; improving social and economic outcomes for all Territorians; and keeping the Territory moving ahead.”

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