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Federal funding cuts to impact on NT indigenous students

Minister for Employment, Education and Training Syd Stirling has criticised a Federal Government decision to cut funding to a number of Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programs this year.

Mr Stirling said the cuts would adversely affect Territory schools.

Affected programs are the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS), Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program (ASSPA) and Vocational Education Assistance Scheme (VEGAS).

"These funding cuts have the potential to severely curtail efforts to improve Indigenous student outcomes in the Territory, particularly in urban areas," Mr Stirling said.

"This is a short-sighted decision that flies in the face of everything the Territory Government is trying to do in terms of lifting Indigenous education standards."

Mr Stirling said the Federal Government changes to IEDA programs would mean:

- No access to Tuition During School Hours for Transition students;
- Limited access to Tuition During School Hours for High School students;
- Maximum tuition time of 100 minutes per week per student;
- Student tuition capped at 2002 numbers, and limited to those schools participating in 2002;
- Cuts to Homework Centre hours and no new Homework Centres established;
- Caps on individual and group tuition; and
- Restrictions on who can access VEGAS funding.

"I have written to Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson to protest these changes and ask that the decision be reversed," Mr Stirling said.

"I will also be writing to Territory schools to determine the full impact these changes will have on their ability to deliver educational support to Indigenous students.

"We need to do all we can to assist Indigenous students to reach their full potential – not deny them access to a better education."

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