TERRITORY LEADS NATION ON LITERACY PROJECT

The Territory is lead jurisdiction for a major national literacy project being rolled out over the next four years to 10,000 Territory students, Minister for Employment, Education and Training Syd Stirling announced today.

Mr Stirling said more than $16 million in Territory and Federal Government funds were being committed to the National Accelerated Literacy Program. It will be managed by the Territory’s Department of Employment, Education and Training in partnership with Charles Darwin University.

“The Territory Government committed around $500,000 to a two-year Accelerated Literacy pilot program which proved highly successful. We have now committed more than $8 million towards the roll out of Accelerated Literacy across the Territory over the next four years. That funding level will be matched by the Federal Government.

“Over the past few years, we have seen improvements in the literacy levels of our students, but there is much more to be done, particularly among indigenous students. Accelerated Literacy has shown early success in getting students with poor literacy skills to reading levels appropriate to their age group.

“Generally, the average rate of reading improvement is one level per year. Analysis by Charles Darwin University so far shows that students undertaking Accelerated Literacy are improving their reading ability at an average of 1.73 levels per year.

“Accelerated Literacy is currently provided in 20 Territory schools, with more than 1440 students involved in the program by the end of 2004.

“We aim to roll the program out to 10,000 students across 100 Territory schools by 2008. It will involve some 700 teachers who will be trained in the program and provided with professional support. Particular focus will be given to Indigenous students in remote schools.”

Charles Darwin University will undertake independent monitoring and evaluation of the project, to clearly identify what areas of the program are working and how it can be improved.

The program will also allow the Territory to develop a specialist English literacy methodology which will be made available to teachers throughout Australia.

“Literacy and numeracy are the key building blocks to a quality education. We are pleased that the Federal Government has recognised the importance of improving literacy outcomes in the Northern Territory by committing funds to this innovative program.

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