

## Explaining Gonski

If you have been anywhere near a radio, TV or newspaper recently you will have heard the word 'GONSKI'. Some people however are unsure of what it is all about.

Gonski is actually the surname of the man who at the request of the Commonwealth Government chaired a team to investigate and recommend better ways to fund education in Australia to make it fairer and more efficient. These recommendations have been included in the National Plan for School Improvement.

The 'Gonski Report' recommended funding for education be based on each child's individual needs. It suggested a basic funding amount per student and then add extra if the student is affected by circumstances that have been shown to affect their chances of doing well at school. Some circumstances could be whether you live in a large city, near a city or in the bush, whether you or others at your school have a low or high income, whether you speak a language other than English at home, whether you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, whether you have a physical or mental disability. These considerations could increase the amount of funding the Commonwealth Government grants to your school.

These loading factors mean that the NT would get more money for education funding. The Prime Minister has said Territory and State Governments must agree to these changes in funding before June 30.

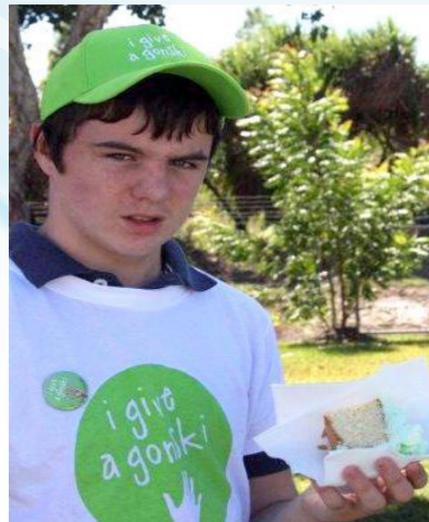
## Explaining Gonski (cont)

COGSO have been asking the Northern Territory Government to sign up to this offer before it is too late and we miss this opportunity to improve funding for education in the NT.

To date the Northern Territory Chief Minister has not agreed to sign up.

If you want better funding for your child/ren's school please contact your local member or write to the Chief Minister and ask him to sign.

Detailed information can be obtained at <http://www.betterschools.gov.au>



*Dripstone Middle School student Isaac Reid at the Darwin Rally for Gonski on May 25th.*

## Presidents Message

Welcome to our Term 1 and 2 Newsletter for 2013. Due to the departure of President Adam Walding, I was acting in the position of President until I formally accepted the role at the April 20 Executive Meeting. I look forward to working with you and putting your School Council concerns and issues to the Chief Executive of Education as well as the Minister.

We welcome to the team Michele Oliphant as your COGSO Training Manager. Michele will be out and about providing your School Councils with training, guidance and support to enable School Council members to comfortably meet the responsibilities of their roles. Michele has substantial experience working with government, schools and community organisations.

We also welcome to COGSO, three new representatives for regions in the Northern Territory. We farewell Kathleen Pledger as our Darwin Region Rep and send our appreciation and thanks for her contribution to COGSO over the past few years.

The first part of 2013 has also been a challenging time for School Councils with increased costs of essential services such as power and water, the proposed changes in staff teacher ratios, school sports delivery models and of course the big discussion about the National Plan for Educational reform - often referred to as 'Gonski'. In this issue of parent we unpack some of these issues.

Heading into the term 2 break - wherever you are in the Territory, stay safe.

Lisa Rothwell



## Rising Costs for Schools

A number of school councils have contacted COGSO about their essential services costs and the gap between the increase and what the department has provided. Most schools had already reduced their energy consumption to the best of their ability when costs rose a number of years ago.

We raised this issue in our regular meetings with the department and the Minister. They have responded by including an extra \$6.2million in the budget for essential services price rises. We have asked for more details on just how this money will be spent and we will keep you informed. Further to this the department has assured us they will support schools facing financial hardship from the rising costs of essential services but concerns have been raised that school will instead cut needed and extracurricular programs in order to find the dollars necessary.

It has also been suggested that some schools are having to use the voluntary contributions from parents and fund raising dollars to cover the costs of essential services. Find out how your school is coping and raise your concerns with your regional COGSO Representative. The more information we have, the better we can represent you.

## Emerging Issues

COGSO has heard of concerns about changes in school sports in the Darwin Region. Please let us know if this is affecting you.

The COGSO AGM is to be held September 7th. Nomination forms for President, Vice President, and Treasurer as well as calls for Motions on Notice were sent to all schools on May 29th. If you would like more information please call the office on 8999 3255 or email [enquiries@ntcogso.org.au](mailto:enquiries@ntcogso.org.au)

## Support for School Councils

Hi all,  
I have just commenced at COGSO in the role of Training Manager. Already I have had the pleasure of travelling with the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) team to deliver Governance workshops to every school Principal and Council Chairperson. The purpose of these was to provide School Councils with an overview of their roles and responsibilities as are outlined in the Education Act. It was so heartening to meet such committed people and to begin to hear some of the stories of the great work going on 'behind the scenes' in Territory schools. COGSO believes that building parent-school partnerships directly helps your children. When families and schools work together in partnership, the research shows that this results in the best outcomes possible for their children, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally. Furthermore, by being a member of a School Council you are not only helping your children but also working to support other people's children, your school community and public education in the Northern Territory. DECS has funded COGSO to develop and deliver school governance training to all government schools in the NT. The aim of the training is to work with School Council members and their communities to increase their awareness and understanding of governance processes. I am available to work directly with School Council members and their communities: I can provide over-the-phone or email support as well as face-to-face. I can also deliver workshops on any particular issue that the Council may wish to work on in more detail. We are currently in the process of employing two School Council Training Officers to work in the regions (one based in Darwin and one in Alice Springs) so we will have plenty of capacity to work with School Councils in any location. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or for further information. I look forward to keeping you all posted on news from the field of what's happening out there in the world of School Councils! In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me. Cheers and hope to see you soon,

Michele

Michele Oliphant

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## Your School Council

Schools are about community. You are an important part of your child's school. School councils are the main decision making body in the school and must be made up of mostly parents. School Councils get their power from the Education Act which is the law that says how schools must be run in the Northern Territory.

Some schools have difficulty getting parents to join the school council and yet nearly every parent we meet has ideas about how the school could be better or different. Anyone who is the parent/guardian of a child in a school is welcome to attend meetings and if you want to get more involved you can nominate for a position on your school council.

The Principal who is responsible for the day to day management of the school and its teachers, also sits on the School Council. He or she, will report back to parents at each Council meeting on how the school is operating and seek advice or feedback on issues of interest or concern. Council members and the Principal, working together can help to raise the level of parental involvement in the school.

Look out for opportunities to contribute to your school. Being a member of your school council is one great way to be involved in your child/children's education.

To find out more about joining your school council, talk to the Principal of your school or the school council chairperson.



Participants at the Central and Barkly Region Governance workshop: L to R  
Michele Oliphant (COGSO Training Manager)  
Warren Williams (Yuendumu School Council)  
Geoff Hobson (Lasseter Group School Principal)  
Max Agnew (Lajamanu School Principal)  
Julie Permezal (Arlparra School Principal)  
Marcia Turner (Arlparra School Council Chairperson)

## Region Representatives

COGSO has recently welcomed new representatives to the Executive Committee from the Palmerston and Rural, Central and Barkly, and East Arnhem regions.

Regional COGSO representative attends the four COGSO Executive meetings each year where they bring to the table issues affecting schools in their regions. Decisions are then made on how COGSO can assist with these issues, which could involve contacting the Chief Executive of the department or the Minister responsible for education.

The current region representatives are:

Suzanne Horton - Katherine Region  
Contact number: 0429 392 970

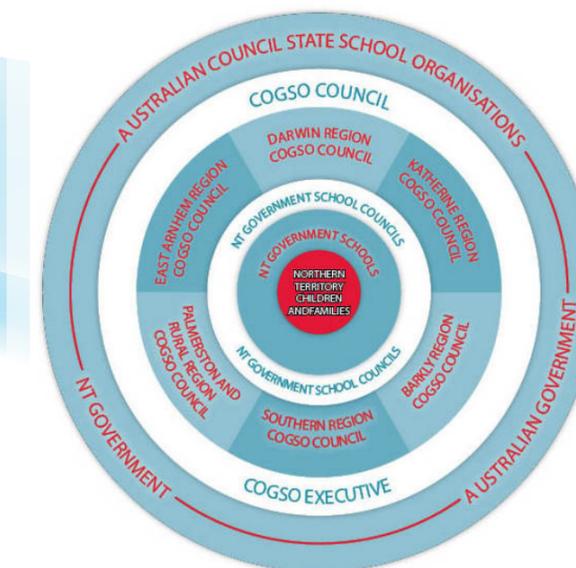
Matt Skoss - Southern Region  
Contact number: 0418 624 631

Susan Wright - Central and Barkly Region  
Contact number: 0499 521 317

Melissa Mills - East Arnhem Region  
Contact number: 0400 078 128

Richelle Kent - Palmerston and Rural Region  
Contact number: COGSO Office 89 993 255

A representative for the Darwin Region is yet to be elected. Kathleen Pledger stepped down from this position last month.



## DECs Chief Executive Report

We are nearly half way through this year and schools have been busy during Term 1 and Term 2. I would like to welcome and thank all School Council members, particularly those who have volunteered for the first time this year.

I would like to introduce myself as I have been away from Education for the past five years working in other NT government departments. I began teaching in 1978. I came from Western Australia on a Commonwealth Teaching Service Scholarship thinking I would stay two -five years. Thirty -four years later I am privileged to have worked through the system. It has been a great career with service completed in senior roles in Education in Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek and finally Darwin. My last Principal-ship was at Braitling Primary School in 1998 where I served for seven years. In my past senior roles in Education I was responsible for Indigenous Education, Student Services and Curriculum. Bernie and I have three girls all of whom are in the NT Education System at Darwin High, Darwin Middle and Ludmilla Primary.

I would also like to thank everyone who attended the recent Governance Workshops for school council members and principals. My Department works in partnership with COGSO to ensure school council members are provided with support and advice.

I have committed to meet with the COGSO President, Lisa Rothwell, on a monthly basis to discuss and seek feedback from the parent community on education matters and parent. It was pleasing to meet with the COGSO Executive on Saturday 1 June to discuss a variety of education matters. Discussion took place about: essential services tariff increases, refreshing the DECS strategic plan, engaging with Asia, a new focus on Indigenous education, targeting additional support for urban and regional schools to address remote student mobility. The Effective Enrolment and New Teacher Staffing Allocation Model and revamping the NT Open Education was discussed. We also talked about the School Review process and Principal Review process. I asked Lisa and the Executive to think about the future and whether school decision making could be enhanced by even greater involvement of parents and councils in school decision making. Government has made it clear that a quality Education is the key to participation in the community and the economy. Government has set us a big agenda as we work to support all our schools. Our Minister, the Hon. Peter Chandler MLA is a strong supporter of school councils and COGSO. As a past school council chairman himself, he has made it very clear to me that he sees parent involvement in school council decision making as critical to a robust government school system. To this end I will work with you to build on the extensive work already undertaken to provide the highest quality education and support for our schools, and most importantly for our children.

I would like to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable school holidays.  
Ken Davies