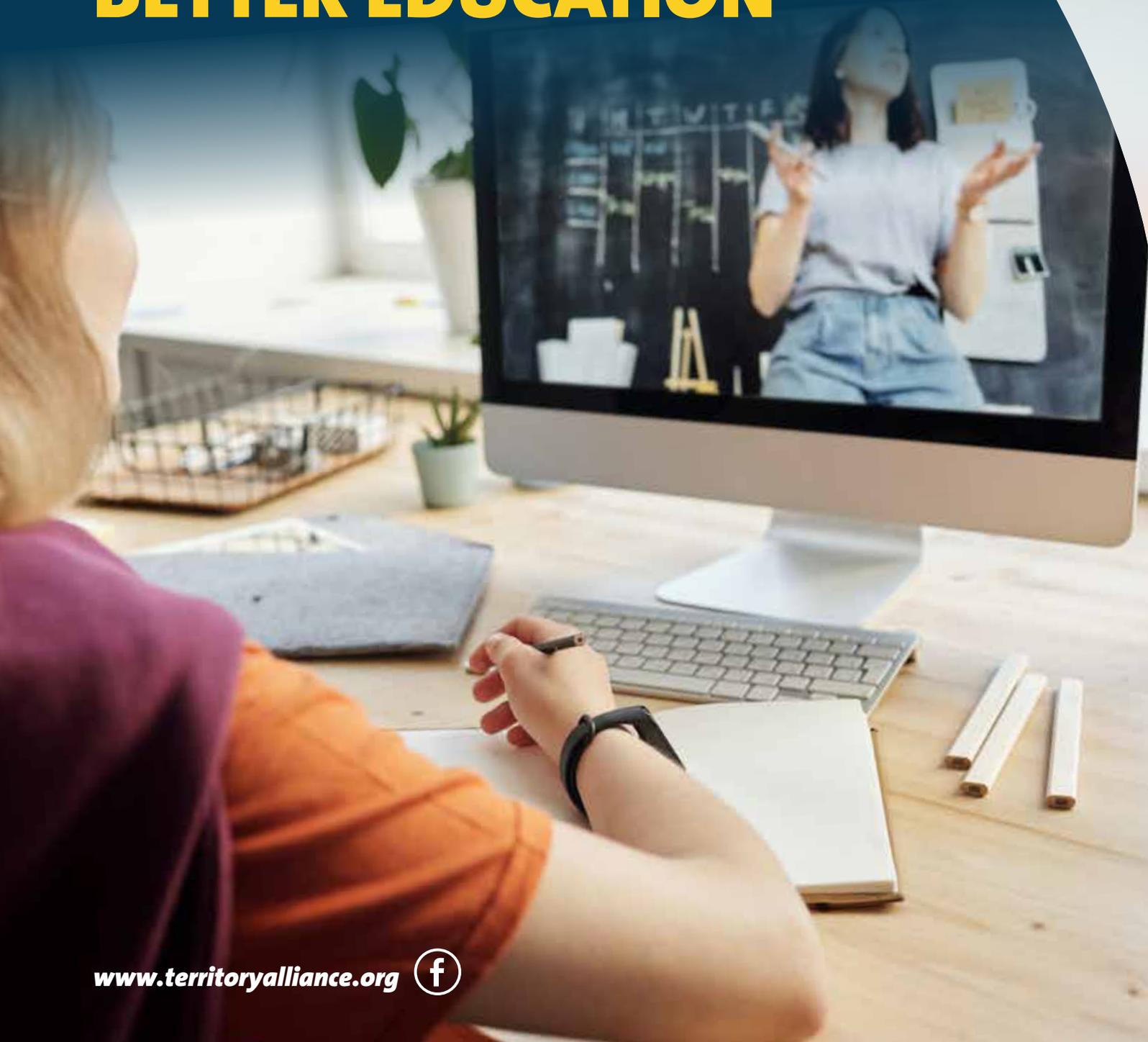




POLICY POSITION PAPER

PARADIGM SHIFT FOR BETTER EDUCATION



PARADIGM SHIFT FOR BETTER EDUCATION

Issue: We are not currently providing the education opportunities our children and our future deserves.

All the evidence shows that access to a high-quality education from early childhood, through primary, secondary and on to tertiary years, creates greater opportunities for productive engagement by individuals, and wider benefits for families, communities and society as a whole.

“Education is proven to provide an individual with greater opportunities and choices in life. ... Improving education outcomes is critical to improving the quality of life for a community ... a strong predictor of future social, educational and occupational success, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds”¹

We are the only state or territory not on track for the early childhood education target of 95 per cent

of all Indigenous four year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025. All other jurisdictions had attendance rates close to the national rate of 93.7 per cent; ours was 73.1 per cent.

Primary and secondary school attendance is declining faster in the NT than for all the eastern seaboard states. Between 2014 and 2019, school attendance declined by less than 2 percentage points in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, whereas the decline in the NT was around 7 percentage points. Attendance in very remote NT primary schools was as low as 2 to 3 days per week.

The NT and NSW are the only jurisdictions failing to meet the minimum standards required for numeracy and literacy at every age level; when it is known that “exceeding national minimum standards provides a better understanding of how well Indigenous children are placed to successfully transition to further study or work.”²

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, and despite some improvement to about 40% in year 12 or equivalent attainment, NT outcomes languish behind all other states and territories for this measure also.

On top of this continuing record of under-performance, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way the world understands and is thinking about the delivery of education at all levels.

Although the NT has been fortunate in being able to continue traditional face-to-face teaching and learning, we also have the opportunity to consider how dramatic and disruptive changes in technology and modes of teaching delivery can potentially improve the way we educate our Territory children, youth, young adults, and those of working age who may wish or need to retrain.



1 Final Report, House of Representatives Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and Department of Education and Training, 'Universal Access to Early Childhood Education'

2 Closing the Gap Report 2000



Policy Position: We see education as an investment in our future that will benefit all Territorians. We understand that investment in Education infrastructure supports economic stimulus and crucial construction sector jobs. We believe all Territorians have the right to a high-quality education and that laying the right foundations for learning and engagement will equip our children and youth for the new world of work.

We will focus on improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians, beginning with a major campaign to address the scourge of Otitis Media, so that Indigenous children can hear and participate in the classroom.

Territory Alliance strongly supports the delivery of bi-lingual education across our regional and remote communities and will work with Aboriginal education experts to support learning in language.

We will develop a significant cohort of teacher aids across early learning, primary and middle schools to assist students with learning needs; and we will invest in essential infrastructure and education precincts to boost our local economies and ensure our children have the best foundation for their, and our, futures.

We are also of the view that we have a unique opportunity to harness new technology to help us overcome some of our historical barriers to teaching delivery and student participation and attainment. Ours will be a bold plan to improve educational outcomes across the board by rethinking both what and how we deliver

We will focus on three key areas for major reform and two key areas of infrastructure investment:

Education Paradigm Shift Initiatives:

- A. Improving Indigenous participation and attainment by strengthening bi-lingual and multi-lingual learning and removing barriers to education delivery through reducing the damaging impacts of hearing loss in the classroom.
- B. Supporting children with learning needs with the employment of additional teacher aides across early childhood, primary and middle years as a priority, including Growing Our Own in remote and regional communities.
- C. Becoming early adopters of new technology as we reform our education system so we can deliver the knowledge and skills required for the future world of work.

Infrastructure Investment

- D. We will establish an essential education infrastructure fund of \$100 million which will be rolled out over the term of Government. This fund will stimulate local economic activity. In addition, we will commence with an immediate funding commitment to proceed with construction projects for schools with identified pressing needs, including Larrakeyah and Berry Springs primary schools, Bradshaw primary, Katherine High School and Casuarina Senior College.

We will establish a clear and transparent needs-based criterion for subsequent applications by any NT school to the infrastructure investment fund. The application process and criteria will follow from our review and reform of the NT education system and will be published in the first twelve months of a Territory Alliance Government.

- E. We will invest \$9M over 10 years to co-locate early childhood and school facilities in connected education precincts, and an additional \$1M to trial the incorporation of aged care facilities within, or networked with, the education precinct and local communities.

A. Improving Indigenous Education Outcomes

We see education as an investment in our future that will benefit all Territorians.

We note and accept that addressing under-performance in Indigenous education is a complex issue – there are significant barriers to Indigenous students achieving to their full potential, “including food insecurity, overcrowding and exposure to substance abuse and other anti-social behaviours ... Many students also face challenges relating to physical and mental ill-health, such as ear health and hearing loss, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and trauma and mental ill-health. Family and community wellbeing can affect engagement and achievement for all students.”³

The Wilson Review⁴ and the Final Report of the House of Representatives *Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait*⁵ (Final Report) found that a range of specific and general health issues impact on learning, most prominently otitis media and the consequent conductive hearing loss; but also social and emotional problems, some arising from trauma; speech and language difficulties; foetal alcohol spectrum disorder; and developmental issues associated with early illness and nutrition.

The Wilson Review noted that ‘it is impossible to manage difficult behaviour without understanding the underlying reasons for those behaviours and engaging in positive efforts to improve wellbeing and engagement as critical first steps’.

3 Final Report, House of Representatives Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

4 Bruce Wilson, *A Share in the future: Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 2015

5

The Final Report goes on to acknowledge “the widespread view, shared in the literature, that addressing such issues will require integrated approaches across different services and departments”.

Accordingly, we will take a holistic approach to education policy. This policy must therefore be read in association with other TA policies, including the *Aboriginal Prosperity and Rights*, *Safe Children and Stronger families* and *Youth Crime* policies; and policies to be announced prior to the election such as *Health and Jobs*.

Territory Alliance also acknowledge and endorses many of the key findings of the Final Report, including:

- » The importance of health and education ... working collaboratively has many perceived benefits to both families and children.
- » A strong connection and engagement with a student’s parents and community is essential to encouraging school attendance and achievement.
- » All students have a right to feel safe, included, valued, and supported at school. ... cultural safety, fostered by strong connection and engagement with community, is the essential foundation upon which all educational and support programs must be built in order to succeed.
- » Where a community is committed to the implementation of a bilingual program, local schools should be supported to implement the program.” (as per Central Land Council) CLC submission).
- » High quality teaching is a critical factor in improving education outcomes for Indigenous students. ... more must be done to train, equip and support teachers ... to meet the challenges of providing high quality teaching and support for Indigenous students.
- » All teachers with a substantial number of Indigenous students should complete ESL/D training ... and where relevant, an opportunity be provided to teachers to undertake local language training if this will



assist in performing their functions, improving communications with their students, as well as forging better relations with the community.

- » An increase in Indigenous teachers, teaching assistants and liaison officers with a connection to the community would not only provide an element of cultural safety in schools, but would also help to provide consistency and stability in terms of staff resources (see B below).
- » Literacy and numeracy are the essential foundation upon which education and further education is based.
- » No single pedagogy will meet the needs of all students. Schools and teachers must be empowered to tailor their teaching to best meet the needs of their students... all pedagogies ... must be evidence-based and must adhere to the Australian curriculum.
- » Emphasising the right to choose ... One size does not fit all students ... families should have the ability to decide the best options and choices for their children and to choose between sending their child to school in their home community, in a nearby regional town or an interstate boarding school” (as per Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory).

Otitis Media: our pre-existing pandemic

The 2017 Australian Medical Association (AMA) Report Card on Indigenous Health⁶ called for a national strategic approach to ending chronic otitis media and its life-long impacts in Indigenous communities, explaining that “Indigenous children experience some of the highest rates of chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM) in the world”.

The main forms of the disease include acute otitis media (AOM), ‘bulging eardrum’; otitis media with effusion (OME), ‘glue ear’; and chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM), ‘runny ears’, which describes the pus discharged when a bulging eardrum bursts.

A Menzies School of Health Research summary in 2017⁷ explains that all forms of the disease are associated with hearing loss, particularly CSOM or ‘runny ears’.

The World Health Organisation states that a 4% prevalence of ‘runny ears’ (CSOM) is a massive public health problem requiring urgent attention. Population surveys in remote Northern Territory communities in 2013 found that 90% of

6 Australian Medical Association, 2017 Report Card on Indigenous Health: A National Strategic Approach to Ending Chronic Otitis Media and its Life Long Impacts in Indigenous Communities, November 2017

7 As provided by Menzies School of Health to the Australian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia (7 June 2017)

Aboriginal children in remote areas have some form of otitis media: 50% have 'glue ear' (OME), 30% have 'bulging ear drums' (AOM), and around 15% have 'runny ears' (CSOM).

The research also shows that “children with persistent hearing loss often have communication and behavioural problems, avoid social interactions, poor school attendance, low levels of literacy and numeracy; poor employment opportunities, increased poverty, youth justice issues and increased incarceration rates.... In fact, hearing is the most prevalent barrier to educational attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Northern Territory”.

Additionally, a very high proportion of incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and adults have some hearing loss (90%), of whom 35% have significant hearing loss due to damage caused during years of otitis media.

Menzies School of Health Research also shows that the prevalence of CSOM or 'runny ears' has fallen from 24% in 2001 to around 13% in 2013, mainly attributable to the introduction of pneumococcal conjugate vaccines. However, this research has also found that otitis media is harder to treat in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared to international settings. Prevention and treatment strategies are not as effective compared to international clinical trials, generally in affluent settings. This is partially due to early age of onset, diversity and multiplicity of OM-pathogens, and the density of bacterial infections. Social determinants such as inadequate crowded and dysfunctional housing,

poor education and lack of employment also contribute to very high rates of untreated acute and chronic infections.

The Northern Territory Council of Government Schools Organisations (NT COSGO) has been very active in making multiple submissions to Government Inquiries and Royal Commissions. In their submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry Into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia, they ask their oft repeated simple question: “How do you learn when you can't hear the teacher?”

NT COSGO submitted that “without practical communication tools being provided in our schools and an interdepartmental collaborative approach between Health and Education our Aboriginal students will continue to be set up to fail as a result of a 'pandemic' of Otitis Media (middle ear infection) which means many literally can't hear their teacher”.

NT COSGO argues in their submission that the following is needed:

- » Classrooms with improved acoustics
- » Sound field amplification systems in classrooms with predominantly Indigenous students
- » Individual amplification devices for one-on-one learning and group learning
- » Community members employed in the classroom fluent in the local language and cognizant of local sign languages



- » Audiology assessments
- » Education and awareness of parents, teachers, and staff of conductive hearing loss
- » Referral to audiology services of students with suspected hearing loss
- » Access to audiology services

The Final Report of the House of Representatives Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Islander Students is unequivocal:

“Early screening, diagnosis and treatment, and management are imperative to address the pandemic of otitis media plaguing Indigenous communities. ... without proper support, students with hearing issues are being set up to fail. Students cannot be expected to learn from a teacher they cannot hear. Classrooms and teachers must be equipped to allow for free and easy communication with students in order for students to have a chance to learn. Considering the staggering proportion of Indigenous students who are living with hearing issues ... classrooms in schools with a significant proportion of Indigenous students should be equipped with sound-field amplification technology.”

Territory Alliance will leave no stone unturned in rising to this challenge. Territory children must not be denied their opportunity for an education and the opportunities this will create for their future lives because they cannot hear their teacher.

In the language of COVID-19, we will adopt a go hard, go fast strategy of an Education Framework for Hearing.

Within the first 100 days of Government, we will create a joint Education, Health and NGO Taskforce to identify a rolling program of infrastructure investment and coordinated service support.



We will enlist the support of the Commonwealth, corporate Australia, NGOs and philanthropic organisations with an interest in Indigenous health and advancement.

Through collaboration with our Aboriginal and community organisations and service providers, we will turn the tide on this pandemic. We will table an annual report on progress until every Territory child is afforded the opportunity for an education that is undiminished by hearing loss.

B. Coming to the aid of students with learning needs

Territory Alliance recognises there is much to do to assist with students with learning needs to achieve their full potential.

We endorse the NT COGSO position that “All children are entitled to be included and to participate in a high-quality education. An inclusive education means that all students are welcomed regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or educational need. They learn, contribute to, and take part in all aspects of school life.”⁸

As NT COGSO explains, “the NT reports the highest proportion nationally of students with additional needs, with 27% of students receiving education adjustments. However, only 22% of all children receiving education adjustments have a formal diagnosis ... there are barriers to students being diagnosed:

- » low levels of health/disability literacy
- » high levels of socio-economic disadvantage

8 <https://www.ntcogso.org.au/practical-help/children-additional-needs>

- » fragmented pathways between health and education
- » lack of affordable private pathways
- » long waiting lists

These barriers are compounded by an overrepresentation of complex family issues, chronic disease and psychological distress, particularly among ATSI populations and further exacerbated in remote locations.”⁹

Territory Alliance is also cognisant of meeting, and is supportive of, the Disability Standards for Education¹⁰ pursuant to the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, which seeks to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people with disabilities. These standards cover enrolment; participation; curriculum development, accreditation and delivery. The Guidance Notes to the Standards explain, in summary, that:

“The Standards are intended to give students with disabilities the same rights as other students. The Standards are based on the position that all students, including students with disabilities, should be treated with dignity and enjoy the benefits of education and training in an educationally supportive environment that values and encourages participation by all students, including students with disabilities. To achieve this, the effect of the Standards is to give students and prospective students with disabilities the right to education and training opportunities on the same basis as students without disabilities. This includes the right to comparable access, services and facilities, and the right to participate in education and training unimpeded by discrimination, including on the basis of stereotyped beliefs about the abilities and choices of students with disabilities.”

9 <https://www.ntcogso.org.au/practical-help/children-additional-needs>

10 https://www.ntcogso.org.au/system/files/uploads/files/2019/dse_plus_guidance_notes_0.pdf

Education providers are required to provide reasonable adjustments ... to assist a student with a disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while taking into account the student’s learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff and other students.”

... The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to participate in the courses or programs provided by the educational institution, and use the facilities and services provided by it, on the same basis as a student without a disability, and without experiencing discrimination.

... The provider must comply with the Standards to the maximum extent not involving unjustifiable hardship.... In determining whether the exception of unjustifiable hardship can be relied on, all relevant circumstances of the particular case are to be taken into account”

NT COGSO acknowledged that the “unique circumstance of the NT with regard to the distribution of students with additional needs requires innovative thinking”¹¹.

Accordingly, TA will work with all stakeholders to identify innovative methods for overcoming the challenges of geography for our students with additional needs.

In the first instance we will invest as a priority in building a significant cohort of locally-based teacher aids in early learning, primary and middle schools to support children with learning needs across urban, regional and remote locations. We will undertake specialist training that will

11 https://www.ntcogso.org.au/system/files/uploads/files/2018/180207_Students%20with%20Additional%20Needs%20-%20Policy%20and%20Practice%20Review%20%28Feb%202018%29%20%281%29.pdf



support culturally safe school environments, take advantage of local knowledge and local languages, and provide specialist skills for early diagnosis, including in under-reported and under-diagnosed areas such as autism.

Our goal will be an inclusive education system that “ensures that all children wherever possible go to their local school and become active members of their school and community; and that that all students have an opportunity to learn and to expect a high-quality education ... that is tolerant of student differences, and can make the required adjustments to ensure access and equity to the full educational program.”¹²

C. New Technology and redesigning for the skills of the future

The Changing World of Work

The Foundation for Young Australians’ (FYA) has analysed how disruption to the world of work has significant implications for young Australians¹³. Their research shows that there are 3 global economic forces changing the way we work. Automation is predicted to radically affect 70% of entry level jobs for young people; jobs are becoming increasingly global (11% of service jobs could be provided from overseas); and the way we work is becoming increasingly flexible.

FYA predicts the average 15 year old, throughout their lifetime, will have 17 jobs over 5 different careers. Their research shows an increasing demand for a core set of transferrable “enterprise skills”, such as digital literacy, problem solving and creativity that will be needed to thrive in the future of work. Employers are already demanding and paying a premium for these skills, which are being demanded across all occupations and industries.

The FYA has identified the four most significant factors supporting young people to secure fulltime work faster:

- » Courses teaching enterprise skills like problem solving, teamwork and communication.
- » Relevant paid work experience.
- » Employment within an area of work which has strong growth future prospects
- » An optimistic mindset and strong well-being by age 18.

They conclude that, “More than ever before young people need access to a relevant, high quality education and learning systems that reflect and respond to their changing and diverse needs, and those of the economy. We need to invest in redesigning learning pathways from education to work to ensure young Australians are equipped and empowered with the skills, mindset and confidence they urgently need”.

12 https://www.ntcogso.org.au/system/files/uploads/files/2018/180207_Students%20with%20Additional%20Needs%20-%20Policy%20and%20Practice%20Review%20%28Feb%202018%29%20%281%29.pdf

13 https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NWO_ReportSeriesSummary-1.pdf



New Skills

A federal department document¹⁴ summarising a range of recent reports and research acknowledges “the need for different skill sets and capabilities for people to thrive in a future technology-rich, globalised, competitive world. The required skills are variously referred to as future skills, 21st century skills, enterprise skills, or enabling skills ... skills that a person will need in order to thrive in the twenty-first century, not just in work, but also in life. While these skills are not necessarily new, they are seen as increasingly important given ongoing change in the nature of work”.

The Productivity Commission¹⁵ states that for many future jobs, these kinds of skills will be needed as part of core competencies. The Business Council of Australia (BCA) observes that employers are looking for workers with a mixture of skills, values and behaviours required for work readiness¹⁶.

Just how these social and enterprise skills can be acquired and verified through the education system is not yet clear. The rich body of experience in teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy, for example, does not yet exist for skills like ‘creative thinking or ‘resilience’.

At the same time, changes in technology are rapidly changing and disrupting the way we understand teaching and learning. At primary and secondary levels, there has been an unprecedented roll-out of multiple technologies and platforms to cater for the necessity of home schooling. This is best described as an on-going

social experiment, the outcomes and directions of which are as yet not fully known.

At the tertiary level, COVID-19 has necessitated and accelerated the move to online and mixed mode (or hybrid) learning that combines online and face-to-face in circumstances where face-to-face teaching can be resumed. It has also resulted in the rapid introduction of short courses and an increasing trend towards micro-credentials of specific technical skill sets.

The one certainty through this period of accelerated disruption is that the education and working landscape will be permanently changed, and that the mass take-up of collaborative platforms and new technologies will pose a mix of both opportunities and challenges.

Australian Qualifications Framework Review

The recently concluded Final Report of the Review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (Noonan Review) has been positively received by Government and many commentators. It provides strong indications of the future directions for qualifications into the world of work and is crucially important because “more than 90% of new jobs expected to be created in Australia by 2023 will require a post-school qualification”¹⁷ and “around half of Australia’s long term unemployed had not attained Year 12 or above as their highest educational attainment”¹⁸.

While the review is primarily directed at senior secondary and tertiary education, the approach adopted is highly relevant for all levels of the education system, which are in effect the pipeline or feeder source for students graduating into the

14 <https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/aqfrnewskills.pdf>

15 Productivity Commission, *Shifting the Dial: 5-year Productivity Review*, 2017

16 Business Council of Australia, *Future-Proof: Protecting Australians Through Education and Skills*, 2017

17 Department of Jobs and Small Business, [Employment Outlook to May 2023](#), p. 8

18 Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Australian Social Trends, Sep 2011](#), viewed 27 September 2019

qualifications system that will help them gain entry into employment.

The Noonan Review argues:

“To retain their relevance and effectiveness, qualifications will need to respond to current and emerging workforce and social needs, be delivered in ways that meet learners’ needs and circumstances, and be trusted by learners, employers and the community generally. The traditional role of formal qualifications is challenged by the ready availability of information through the Internet, declining trust in institutions and traditional sources of authority. Many people gain skills and experience in a variety of settings outside the formal education and training system.

The ongoing effect of new technology – particularly artificial intelligence – is transforming the world of work through its power to analyse, aggregate and disseminate information, including new knowledge. Production of goods, transportation and services, including health and the media, are in a constant state of disruption and innovation.

Many current job roles will become redundant, particularly in areas of standardised and routine production and service delivery. But new roles are also emerging, roles that place a premium on human aptitudes and capabilities, including the ability to understand, shape, interpret and reshape the use of technology. Skills required for sustainable development, including the transition to lower carbon emissions, and which address the impact of climate change, are also increasingly important.

Workplaces are also transforming. They are becoming more diverse and inclusive, more flexible in employment and work practices, and generally less hierarchical. Teamwork and collaboration are

increasingly valued, as is collective rather than individual initiative and achievement. Effective and ethical leadership and governance are essential to the success and reputation of organisations.

Employers have strong and growing expectations that graduates will be work ready and productive. In turn, employees expect to have their skills and capabilities recognised and rewarded with ongoing opportunities for career and personal development. Individuals will need to be able to manage multiple career transitions, and to build their own career paths and business opportunities, through continuous learning and development. Many professions are also refocusing their requirements for professional entry and ongoing accreditation on a broad range of aptitudes and capabilities; their perspective is broadening from the familiar focus on technical and occupational proficiency.

Innovation within firms and across industries, underpinned by workforce capability, will be essential to improved productivity and competitiveness.”

The Noonan Review makes a compelling case for reconceiving qualifications to recognise



the learning outcomes achieved according to contemporary definitions of knowledge and skills and the ability to take action. It proposes a framework that ensures “graduates have the knowledge and skills required for the future workforce and social participation.”

It proposes listing key general capabilities such as language, literacy and numeracy, and the ability to take action acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort in skill focus areas that include learner self-management, psychomotor skills, problem solving, decision making, communication, cooperation and collaboration. It also proposes the development of an agreed framework for core work skills such as digital literacy and ethical decision making.

The Review envisages a “joined up and accessible post-secondary education and training system ... with clear and flexible entry and exit points, including pathways within and between VET and higher education; and from senior secondary to post-secondary education and training” and support for increasing access to tertiary education in regional areas, including support for students and raising their aspirations.

Looking to the Future Report

The Report of the review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and

*training*¹⁹, led by Professor Peter Shergold, was released on 23 July 2020.

The report makes a number of recommendations to help young people navigate their senior years and enter further study or the workforce. Key recommendations include the introduction of a Learner Profile that will identify a student’s range of skills, knowledge and experiences both from inside and outside the classroom, the development of a national strategy to deliver VET to secondary students and strengthening career guidance by creating a network of career guidance hubs with an initial focus on regional and remote areas.

Professor Shergold is quoted as saying a learner profile would shift emphasis to skills developed by all students, such as leadership, collaboration and problem-solving, and should form the basis of a digital education passport could continue to curate into adulthood by adding new qualifications or experience.

Territory Alliance welcomes the report and looks forward to actively working with the Commonwealth Government on implementation. We are particularly keen to encourage the introduction of career guidance and VET training to our secondary students, and we see the recognition of external skills in a Learner Profile as an opportunity to explore how the involvement in community activity and on-country programs (formal and informal), can acknowledge and recognise the receipt of cultural knowledge.

Territory Alliance will focus on new technology initiatives to shift to a modern paradigm in the way we educate our children and youth. Our education system will be remodeled so we can provide a life-long approach to developing the mix of technical, foundational and enterprise skills that will be needed to equip our students for 21st century life and work.



19 <http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/EC-Reports-and-Publications.aspx>

We will be at the cutting edge of adopting new technology, which has the potential to become one of the most effective and powerful tools to help overcome the challenges of remoteness.

Within the first 100 days of Government we will commence trials of Virtual Reality learning rooms in our Senior Schools and some remote communities throughout the Territory.

We will partner with local and leading national and international educational institutions and technology companies to create a more seamless education system that is designed to help our students achieve the necessary skills and attributes they will need for life and work while they transition through the various levels of our current system.

These institutions and companies are currently grappling with the same challenges and opportunities we are; and will welcome the opportunity to partner with a public administration that is open, progressive and committed to finding new ways of building improved educational outcomes off a mixed base. This will include the use of technology to find new and improved ways to deliver an effective mix of digital and face-to-face delivery in urban, rural and remote communities.

These institutions and companies will partner with us because we will provide them with a social licence to test and implement new technology, while at the same time developing new knowledge and IP that will inform the future technology use and associated redesign of education systems world-wide.

The trial use of virtual reality as a key educational tool for our children in urban and remote classrooms because we know they are attracted to this technology and that it has the potential to provide a new and exciting window into educational resources and learning opportunities.

The end goal is to ensure that our children and youth will be equipped with the right mix of foundational skills, personal attributes and



advanced digital literacy to make them highly sought after and active participants in the new knowledge economy.

We will embrace these disruptive times to create generational change in the way we understand, deliver and benefit from educating our children and youth. By attracting the best minds nationally and internationally to help redesign our education system to effectively provide these life and work skills wherever our students are living, we can help current and future generations of young Territorians to have the best chance of prospering in the new world of work.

D. Essential Infrastructure Fund

We will establish an essential education infrastructure fund of \$100 million which will be rolled out over the term of Government.

This fund will stimulate local economic activity and recovery, and we will invest early by commencing the rolling program with an immediate focus on schools identified with pressing need. In addition, we will support specific infrastructure initiatives that have the dual benefit of providing economic stimulus in an economy hit by recession:

Larrakeyah Primary School: Endorse the Larrakeyah Primary School Masterplan and commence with Stage One, construction of a new Classroom block and New Pre-School to alleviate the capacity constraint issues at this inner Darwin school.

Berry Springs Primary School: Commence an upgrade of the school hall, a facility which



also serves as a cyclone shelter for the rural communities of Berry Springs, Darwin River, Livingstone and surrounds. More significantly, this shelter cannot be used for purpose due to its poor acoustics which adversely affects students with additional needs. It cannot be currently used for school programs like large assemblies as it needs cooling. We will use the Millner and Malak assembly hall eco-friendly models for cooling.

Casuarina Senior College: Refurbishment of two classroom blocks not significantly upgraded for decades and enclose existing pavilion. The College is well positioned to take pressure off other urban senior colleges with this significant upgrade.

Katherine High School: New library, toilet upgrades, classroom painting and fit-out and IT upgrades. Katherine High has been experiencing a spike in enrolments in recent years with additional pressures coming from the RAAF expansion at Tindal Air Base. In addition to this Stage One construction project Territory Alliance will work with the Australian Defence Force to promote a partnership to create a new STEM building.

Bradshaw Primary School: Provision of a new inclusive playground and shade cover for the junior school.

We will use the review process associated with our initiative for early adoption of new technology and redesigning our education system for the skills of the future (see B. above)

to inform and establish a clear and transparent needs-based criteria for subsequent applications by any NT school to the infrastructure investment fund.

The application process and criteria will be published in the first 100 days of a Territory Alliance Government and will enable local schools to overcome pressing conventional infrastructure needs as well as innovative initiatives to improve education delivery and outcomes.

E. Co-location

In addition to reviewing the modes and content of education delivery, we will commence a process of co-locating suitable education precincts from early childhood through to primary and secondary years.

Parents appreciate the ability to have single drop-off points for their children and there are demonstrable benefits from sharing facilities and strengthening the connection between education providers, parents and local communities.

There is a rich body of evidence in Australia and internationally²⁰ that demonstrates the benefit connecting schools and communities with early years, particularly in overcoming social disadvantage and learning challenges. New ways of working collaboratively are required to remove the barriers to learning when children start school. Linking schools and early years supports an approach to child development and education that focuses on the whole life course and addresses a range of barriers including poor experiences in the early years,, parents' own poor experience of school and a range of known and unidentified developmental problems.

Engaging parents as active partners can commence with parents becoming familiar and comfortable with the school environment (or precinct) before their children start attending. This can foster a more holistic approach to supporting families and creating the best

20 Linking Schools and Early Years Services Final Report Prepared for The R.E. Ross Trust, prepared by Centre for Community Child Health Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne June 2006

possible environment for children to develop; while schools will benefit from having greater access to their future students and their families and communities. Our professional staff at all levels of education will be able to build a collegiate environment, including sharing new developments in education research and delivery.

Territory Alliance commits to building three co-located early learning centres per year on suitable school grounds, noting that some facilities are already co-located, and others may not be suitable for co-location. We will work, wherever possible, with existing providers, to establish an orderly and effective transition into new facilities and precincts.

Territory Alliance will provide \$300,000 to assist in building and equipping each of these facilities. We anticipate the precinct will be governed and managed by an appropriate and locally agreed mix of school-run facilities, not for profit providers and commercial childcare providers. The agreement will be formalised through a multi-party long term lease and mutually beneficial service agreements as required.

This \$9 million program over 10 years will provide steady and consistent stimulus and recovery funding investment.

We will also adopt and pilot the learnings of the John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research in Albury-Wodonga²¹, which includes among its initiatives a proposal for co-locating aged care facilities with kindergartens, schools and community facilities. The proposal is to link these usually separated facilities by walkways, parkways and shared gardens purposely designed to encourage active integration and interaction between different generations. This proposal extends the successful social experiment of bringing together elderly people in a retirement community with a group of 4-year-olds, which was recently screened as a documentary on the ABC, *Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds*.

21 <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/jrc/projects>

We think the Territory culture and lifestyle, which has always encouraged and been conducive to the social and cultural mixing of multiple generations, and which understands the level of respect and esteem in which Aboriginal elders are held, including as teachers or instructors of cultural knowledge, is particularly suited for trial in the Northern Territory.

As NT COGSO regularly reminds government inquires:

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” - Nelson Mandela.

Territory Alliance believes education is a crucial investment in our collective future. We will wage a campaign to overcome the impacts of hearing loss in our classrooms as one important step in helping us to turn the tide on Indigenous education outcomes. We will embrace new technology and new ways of learning so we can prepare our children and youth for the new world of work. And we will develop a significant cohort of teacher aids at early learning, primary and middle schools to assist with the challenges of students with learning needs; and invest in essential infrastructure and education precincts to boost our local economies and ensure our children have the best foundation for their, and our, futures.



