

## Minister – Centralian Schools must not be forgotten

Mr Gerard Reid, President of NT COGSO, said “The Minister needs to talk directly with the Central Australian school Councils and not local department executive staff to hear exactly what has been cut from their schools for 2015.

Minister Chandler publicly claimed in an interview recently, *“I’ve just been speaking to schools in Central Australia. Every single school down here have done their budgets for next year and all of them are..., I say in the black.”*

“COGSO can advise the Minister that some schools had their budgets returned to them again and again, until they had cut enough staff to get them in the black. We sincerely urge the Minister to ask the question – ‘what did the budgets look like when they were released to schools – what did the schools cut to get them in the black?’, Mr Reid urged.

“COGSO was shocked to hear last week that not one of the school councils had had a formal budget meeting and sat down to discuss any proposed budget for 2015 in their schools”

“School Councils should see the 2015 Budget Planner & Allocation reports from their Principal, in addition to being able to have, in writing, any cuts to staff and programs, prior to the department approving them”.

“The Minister has maintained that Principals have been working with school councils on school budgets since September. It is just not true”

“School Council members were given a false sense of security by being told ‘budgets have gone in, we’re way ahead of Darwin!’ Whilst Principals were told to ‘put a positive spin on the budgets to their council’, Mr Reid said.

“The truth is school councils were ambushed. The school budget cuts happened without their knowledge. Even where some schools were provided more money than last year under the model, they had to contribute back to the department to pay for the Ministers pay rise he didn’t fund”



“The cost is significant for several schools and this is on the back of two years of cuts in a row”.

“COGSO has heard that at one Centralian school, teaching contracts are being offered for only 6 months due to budgetary pressures. Other schools have reduced the hours of casual staff.”

“Several schools have a high level of experienced teachers and are confused as to why the department would not cover the salaries for their staff;

‘why are we not getting additional money for their salaries?’

‘why did we lose money from our budgets when we couldn’t fill a position last year?. We still need that position. Why are we being penalised?’

‘why did the department attach staff to our school without asking the Principal and then expect us to pay for it?’

“Why indeed Minister. It is time to talk directly with schools and give them the answers they deserve, without any ‘positive spin’ ” concluded Mr Reid.

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