

STILL WAITING TO BE HEARD.....

The President of the Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (NTCOGSO) met with Minister Birmingham in Darwin last week to discuss Territory public education.

“One of the key issues we raised is the heartbreaking educational disadvantage of hearing loss which is a disability experienced by the majority of our remote Aboriginal students. We advised the Minister that in addition to lodging a submission, NTCOGSO also met with the Senate Select Committee into Hearing Health and Wellbeing in Darwin in 2017.”

“On behalf of Northern Territory public schools, we are extremely disappointed in the Australian Government’s Response to the recommendations of the Senate Select Committee report ‘Still waiting to be heard’. Particularly in relation to Recommendation 3 for ‘the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training to create a *hearing health support fund* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’.”

“The Australian Government’s response completely ignores an important part of the recommendation which calls for health funding. They default to the position; education funding is already provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This is not true. Let us be clear. There is no funding provided for students with hearing loss.”

“We consider this a flagrant disregard of decades of research and of their own Select Committee recommendations to address hearing disabilities faced by remote Aboriginal students. This is neglect. Our students have a critical need for additional health and education funding from the Australian Government.”

“In addition to the *hearing health support fund* which was proposed by the Select Committee, NTCOGSO is also seeking that this fund provide upgrades for all remote Australian schools to current hearing acoustic standards. We look forward to continuing this conversation with Senator Nigel Scullion.”

“Following the Select Committee hearing in Darwin last year we heard from their Deputy Chair, Steve Georgansis MP. Mr Georgansis discussed with us his personal story of hearing loss contracted late in life through Otitis Media which is the same disease affecting 50% of our remote Aboriginal students. He shared that the only place he is able to hear well, is in Parliament House Canberra.”

“We know Parliament House has sound systems in the House of Representatives, Senate and Great Hall that deliver clear, extremely intelligible, natural sounding voices, with excellent immunity from feedback.”

“Our students, no matter where they live, deserve an equal opportunity to hear.”

“We truly believe that if we are to *ever* have a chance at Closing the Education Gap, the first commitment of the Australian Government must be to ensure our children are able to hear at school.”

“Our students are ‘Still waiting to be heard’ Ministers Simon Birmingham and Greg Hunt.”



Tabby Fudge
President

Enclosed: Australian Government response to the Inquiry into the Hearing Health and Wellbeing of Australia **14 Aug 2018**

The Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations represents 19,000 Northern Territory families, their 33,500 children, the school communities that support them, in 154 public schools.

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17 August 2018

For further information on NT COGSO visit www.ntcogso.org.au