

Media Release – 29 November 2012

Public school parents to be hit hard by Power and Water Corp increases

The Northern Territory Government's announcement that it will allocate funding to Territory public schools to reduce the Power and Water Corporation tariff increases is less than acceptable for NT school students.

Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (NT COGSO) President Adam Walding said public schools are still reeling from increases under the previous Government and it appears they will be further hurt under the current Government's plan to increase power, water and sewerage costs.

"In Education Minister Robyn Lambley's response to Opposition questions in Parliament she said 'instead of a 30 per cent increase in electricity bills, we will reduce that to 15 per cent, effectively, by the use of significant subsidies'," Mr Walding said.

"This is not acceptable. Schools work hard to achieve improved energy efficiency but support from the NT Government to achieve energy savings has been minimal. Schools are struggling with ageing plant and infrastructure that, for the most part, was not designed for Territory conditions and isn't energy efficient.

"The NT Government has failed to consider the needs of our children and their learning".

"We call on the Government to support the Department of Education and Children's Services by providing full and adequate funding to our schools and school councils to cover the full effect of decisions such as these tariff increases."

Mr Walding said schools received just over half the funding needed to cover rises under the previous regime and it appeared that given the potential impact on Territory school children and their learning that the tariff increases will have the NT Government clearly had not engaged in any consultation with the already struggling parents of the Territory's public school students.

"I will reserve full judgment until the release of the 'mini-budget'," Mr Walding said. "But given the Minister's response in Parliament, I am sceptical."

He said even more disappointing is that NT COGSO wrote to Chief Minister Terry Mills on 5 November seeking a response as to how schools will be funded to cover any Power and Water Corporation increases and what the Government's policy was on funding schools for essential services.

"The only response we've had was from the Chief Minister stating he forwarded our letter to the Minister for Education," Mr Walding said. "We are yet to receive Minister Lambley's response. The Government's lack of communication to the peak parent representative body is disappointing to say the least."

NT COGSO urges parents not to underestimate the influence they can have surrounding decisions like this.

"NT School Councils have the strongest legislative power of any jurisdiction in Australia," Mr Walding said. "Ask your school how this will affect your children and their learning, ask what resources or programs will be sacrificed to pay for these increases at the school level, and ask how you can get your voice heard."

Further information:

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