

**COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS**

**Election Commitments**

The new NT Government campaigned on trust and integrity so we look forward to them delivering on their all important Election Commitments to our public education system.

NT COGSO put significant effort into lobbying all major parties – the CLP and Labor and other candidates in the 2016 NT election to ensure that the resources we’ve seen stripped out of our schools are returned to give our children a fighting chance at a quality public education.

The election commitments we received from Labor were in writing and provided by the now Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer, the Hon. Nicole Manison MLA on behalf of the then Opposition when she was the Shadow Minister for Education.

It’s time for the rubber to now hit the road and we are working closely with the Minister for Education, the Hon. Eva Lawler. We have highlighted four crucial Labor election commitments:



COGSO President, Tabby Fudge with NT Treasurer, Nicole Manison (former Shadow Education Minister)

**SCHOOL FUNDING:** “Labor will audit and assess the global schools budgeting funding model. Specific attention will be given to the weighting for disability.”

**WELLBEING:** “Labor is committed to providing an additional \$8 million (\$32 million over four years) to address students with disabilities, early intervention and challenging behaviours.”

**REVERSING TEACHER CUTS:** “Labor has announced an additional \$124 million over four years will be put into the education budget. \$31 million will be placed into the education budget to take effect from 1 January 2017. Of this \$31 million, a total of \$20 million will be directly injected into school budgets.”

**SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS:** “Labor has committed to providing an additional \$1 million to support schools with administration, especially resulting from the introduction of Global School Budgets – business managers and assist schools in handling their financial administration.”

We look forward to working with the Northern Territory Government to ensure these commitments are delivered. You can do your bit to help. As parents we urge you to contact your local politician to support these important funding initiatives. Send an email, write a letter or make a phone call.

**Contact Your Northern Territory Elected Member**

**MLA Arafura**  
Lawrence Costa  
8999 6950

**MLA Braitling**  
Dale Wakefield  
8951 5463

**MLA Fannie Bay**  
Michael Gunner  
8999 6437

**MLA Katherine**  
Sandra Nelson  
8973 8461

**MLA Port Darwin**  
Paul Kirby  
8999 6755

**MLA Araluen**  
Robyn Lambley  
8951 5588

**MLA Brennan**  
Tony Sievers  
8999 5587

**MLA Fong Lim**  
Jeff Collins  
8946 1475

**MLA Namatjira**  
Chansey Paech  
8951 5561

**MLA Sanderson**  
Kate Worden  
8999 6781

**MLA Arnhem**  
Selena Uibo  
8973 8780

**MLA Casuarina**  
Lauren Moss  
8999 6343

**MLA Goyder**  
Kezia Purick  
8999 6556

**MLA Nelson**  
Gerry Wood  
8999 6713

**MLA Spillet**  
Lia Finocchiaro  
8999 6667

**MLA Barkly**  
Gerry McCarthy  
8962 4641

**MLA Daly**  
Gary Higgins  
8999 6432

**MLA Johnston**  
Ken Vowles  
8999 6620

**MLA Nhulunbuy**  
Yingiya Guyula  
8987 0125

**MLA Stuart**  
Scott McConnell  
8951 5568

**MLA Blain**  
Terry Mills  
8999 5572

**MLA Drysdale**  
Eva Lawler  
8999 5397

**MLA Karama**  
Ngaree Ah Kit  
8999 6659

**MLA Nightcliff**  
Natasha Fyles  
8999 6743

**MLA Wanguri**  
Nicole Manison  
8999 6795

# COGSO President's Message

Here we are at the end of another school year, weeks away from Christmas. I hope your children have had a wonderful year at school and are excited about the year to come. Congratulations to all of those who finished year 12 this year, I wish you a bright and happy future.

Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations (NT COGSO) was formed in 1971 to support and represent school communities at a Territory level, to the Minister of Education directly and via the Department of Education through the Chief Executive.



Tabby Fudge with ACSSO President, Phillip Spratt

At a National level COGSO represents Territorians to the National Parent Body, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO). We also represent you and your children, at a Federal Government level in Canberra.

Since the new Education Act in December 2015 we are now referring to School Councils as a School Representative

Body. This allows for the Boards of Independent Public Schools to come under the same umbrella as the functions are exactly the same. School Representative Bodies are the governing bodies of their school and their membership must be made up of at least 50% of parent members. **COGSO is here to support Parents/ Carers, Principals, Teachers and School Staff, who are supporting our children.**

A core part of COGSO's function is to provide **Governance and Finance Training** to School Representative Bodies.

I would encourage all schools to begin planning for next year and book your training with the COGSO office.

**Congratulations to all of our fabulous Northern Territory Teachers on World Teacher's Day.** You are nothing short of amazing. It was wonderful to attend the Honourable Minister for Education Eva Lawler's Award Ceremony at Parliament House to celebrate the fantastic achievements of Teachers, Teacher Aides, Support Staff and our schools right across the Territory. **Every day you change lives and shape our future society and communities. My most sincere and heartfelt thanks to you all.**

At our Annual General Meeting in November we invited presenters from Smiling Mind to explain their web and app-based program. It has been developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to people's lives. Around 15,000 teachers throughout Australia are using this app in their classrooms with great success. One million people worldwide are using this free App, I encourage you to have a look at their web page.

The universities of UCLA, Harvard, Oxford, Monash, Melbourne, Johns Hopkins and Lund have all undertaken studies on mindfulness meditation, proving that regular practice helps combat stress, improves focus and

increases resilience. Brain imaging has also shown that meditation even changes the brain, thereby reducing our stress response. Melbourne University has mindfulness as part of their medical degree.

The Smiling Mind Education Program has proven that it help students with sleep, wellbeing, managing emotions, concentration and school behaviour including reductions in bullying. The program also assists with: stress management, increased resilience, increased creativity, better decision making, and a sense of calm, clarity and contentment. Importantly, the same benefits were recorded for Teachers. I believe that every school in the Northern Territory would benefit from this program.



**COGSO continues to advocate for actual student needs based funding** for our schools. Education reform should only ever be about improving student outcomes, not improving a short term financial bottom line.



President, Tabby Fudge and Executive Officer Michelle Parker at the National meeting of peak parent organisations. Pictured here with Tasmania Education Minister, Jeremy Rockliff, November 2016

For these reasons it was with great relief that Territory parents welcomed the election commitments from our Territory Labor Government. Funding our school budgets with an **additional \$20M in January 2017** is a welcomed improvement.

**We are far short the \$114M which was cut by the previous government.** COGSO will continue to advocate for school budget funding based on Student Enrolment numbers which is standard throughout Australia. **We are the only place in Australia which does not fund our schools based on Student Enrolments.**

We will also continue to represent schools by advocating for staffing sick leave costs to be returned to the Department of Education. **It is not appropriate that a school budget which is desperately trying to meet a students educational needs, is put under pressure by having to pay for staff who need to take extended sick leave.**

As our school year winds down, our weather heats up, heralding the oncoming Christmas break. **Have a fun and safe Christmas break with your family and friends.** Best wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2017.



Thank you  
Tabby Fudge  
President, NT COGSO

Below are some of the Motions passed at the COGSO AGM & Northern Territory Full Council meeting held on Saturday 12th November.



**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Minister for Education and the Department of Education actively seek to bring the Northern Territory public school funding model into line with the rest of Australia so that we are **funded on enrolment**.

**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Territory government commit to assigning, to **every primary school, a counsellor appropriately resourced in line with middle and senior schools** in order to address rising mental health issues facing students today.

**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Territory Government provide **adequate resources for regional & remote communities for children with additional needs**.



**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Territory government commit to **implementing the evidence-based Smiling Mind program** (under their 2017 \$8M behavioural management allocation) from the start of 2017 to all schools in the Northern Territory **in line with the Department of Education's Strategic Plan that every child is a successful learner**.

**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Department of Education supports all schools across the Northern Territory to **implement a mental health and emotional wellbeing program for the whole of school community**.

**Motion passed:** That COGSO request that the Minister for Education advise on **what steps are being taken to reduce agency red tape**.

**Motion passed:** That the Minister for Education support our Budget Submission recommendation and **establish a Working Party** to deliver Hearing Loss Learning Innovations with the Department of Health, Department of Education, COGSO and AMSANT representatives in January 2017.



**Motion passed:** That the Minister for Education support our Budget Submission recommendation and establish a **dedicated Grant to deliver the roll-out of audio assessments and sound amplification systems across 10 schools** in year 2017/18 as priorities.



**Motion passed:** That the Minister for Education support our Budget Submission recommendation and ensure **the reinstatement and employment of additional Department of Education hearing staff based in all regions**.

**Motion passed:** That COGSO request the Minister for Education to **commit to addressing and resolving identified systemic barriers and red tape** that prevent the effective implementation of resources for our children by the Departments of Health, Education, Disability, Youth Justice, Children & Families.



For a full list of the Motions passed please visit: [www.cogso.org.au](http://www.cogso.org.au)

# Smiling Mind Program presentations in the Northern Territory

## What is Smiling Mind?

Smiling Mind is a unique web and app-based program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to peoples lives.

## Supporting the Community

Smiling Mind exists to help build mental health and wellbeing, using positive and innovative tools that are accessible to all.

## Why?

Everyone is affected by mental illness.



**1 in 5 Australians**

Suffer from a mental illness in any one given year, and 1 in 2 will experience mental illness in their lifetime.



**1 in 4 Secondary Students**

Suffer from a mental illness



**1 in 7 Primary Students**

Suffer from a mental illness



**75% of mental illness**

Mental illness has its onset before age 24.

"We've found that for children younger than 7 (the starting point for Smiling Mind) a little mindfulness audio clip from "Sitting Still Like a Frog" is working effectively in our early years' classrooms."

Cheryl Edward  
School Counsellor  
Katherine Remote Region

"I thought the Smiling Mind program was really beneficial for me because it calmed me down and helped me to relax and concentrate".  
- Student, Year 7



Smiling Mind presentation held at Rosebery Primary School

## Student outcomes after participating in the program

### Improved mental health

Student sleep, wellbeing, ability to manage emotions, concentration, and school behaviour significantly improved.

### Reductions in bullying and classroom

Students reported significant reductions in bullying and disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

### Students at-risk benefited the most

Students who experienced higher levels of emotional distress before participating in the program showed the biggest improvements as a result of the program.

## Teacher outcomes after participating in the program

### Improved mental health

Teacher sleep, wellbeing, distress, ability to manage, describe and accept emotions, tension and mindfulness all improved.

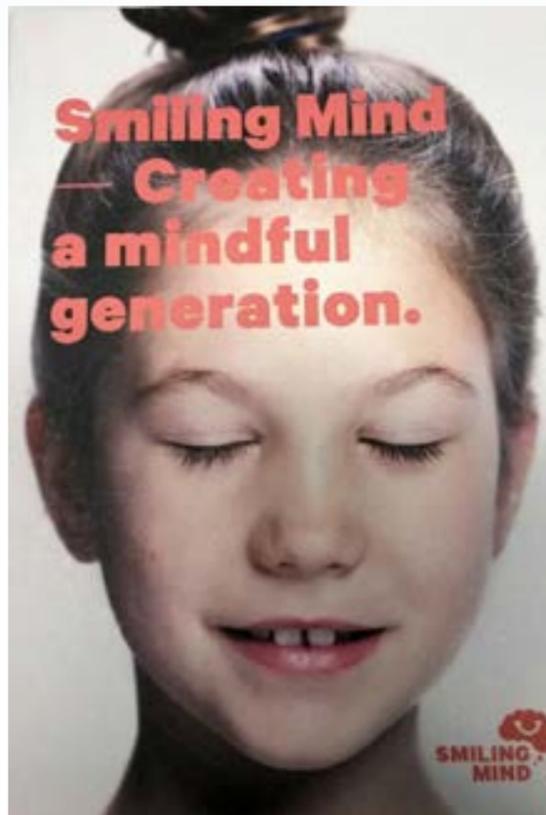
### Improved concentration and sleep

Teachers reported significant improvements in their concentration and the quality of their sleep after participating in the program.



Smiling Mind is one of the most common apps that I regularly use professionally with adolescent clients suffering from both mood and affective disorders as well as the worried well. It is beautifully designed, easy to use and gets the thumbs up from my young clients. I would unhesitatingly recommend Smiling Mind to all workers with young people in health, education and welfare.

- Dr Michael Carr-Gregg



**Smiling Mind — Creating a mindful generation.**

## Motion passed at the COGSO AGM & NT Full Council meeting held on Saturday, 12th November:

*That the government commit to implementing the evidence-based Smiling Mind program (under their 2017 \$8M behavioural management allocation) at the start of 2017 to all schools in the Northern Territory in line with the Department of Education's Strategic Plan that every child is a successful learner.*

Just as people practice daily dental hygiene by brushing their teeth, mindfulness meditation is a form of brain hygiene – it cleans out and strengthens the synaptic connections in the brain.

- Dan Siegel

"After, I felt warm, collected, happy and like a rainbow was inside me." - Student, Year 4



## Proven effectiveness

The research evaluating the Smiling Mind educational program provides strong evidence to show that the quality of the Smiling Mind program is effective in buffering student psychological distress, and enhancing positive emotions and resilience, particularly for students at risk.

It also improves sleep, student behaviour and concentration.

**1,853 students**

1,853 students from 12 Victorian Schools took part in the research.

## Improved mental health

Student sleep, wellbeing, ability to manage emotions, concentration, and school behaviour significantly improved

## Students at-risk benefited the most

Students who experienced higher levels of emotional distress showed the biggest improvements as a result of the program

# A message from Acting Chief Executive, Department of Education

As we approach the end of another busy school year, I would firstly like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing work and commitment of the COGSO team and its representatives across the NT to Territory schools and students. We value our relationship with COGSO and recognise that your work has been critical to building strong and productive partnerships between our schools and communities and to improving the coherence and capability of the system through good school governance.

We welcomed our new Minister for Education in August, the Hon Eva Lawler MLA, who we look forward to working with to continue to progress the critical work of the agency.

We have much to celebrate this year and, while acting as Chief Executive, I have had the pleasure of witnessing a range of achievements. In September, I attended the Maningrida School mid-year graduation ceremony where students and young mothers, Bernice Baker and Alishia Darcy officially received their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training. Bernice and Alishia are both inspiring and outstanding members of the school community and it was an honour to attend their graduation ceremony and see the supportive environment at Maningrida School, where families and the local community joined in the celebration.

We are also committed to improving schooling for students in the Middle Years through the Work Like the Best – Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016 – 2018. As part of this strategy, we saw the inaugural Middle Years conference held in September 2016, for principals and teachers of government middle schools. The conference provided our teaching staff access to professional development on student wellbeing and classroom strategies to deliver high quality teaching and learning programs to middle years' students.

We have launched an updated strategic plan for 2017 in line with Government priorities and direction, which looks to further advance our progress towards our vision for all young Territorians to become confident and capable global citizens.

## Key actions for the department in 2017 include:

- implementing a school wide positive behaviour framework to provide a consistent approach to behaviour and wellbeing in schools and provide timely interventions that support the learning needs of students. Provide alternative education and enriched educational experiences through a range of arts, sporting programs and cultural activities with a particular focus on disengaged students.
- strengthening and supporting the professional development for middle leaders, and aspiring and practicing principals to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to lead and manage a school.
- continuing to expand the delivery of Families as First Teachers program into urban areas and additional remote communities.

Wishing you all a very well earned rest this holiday season. The hard work and commitment of school councils and boards make a real difference to student outcomes and looking forward to continuing to grow success together in 2017.



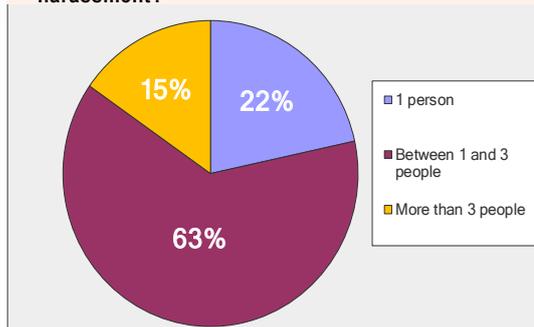
**Vicki Baylis**  
**Acting Chief Executive**  
**Department of Education**

## PARENT SURVEY - BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

The NT COGSO survey on bullying in schools has 220 respondents to date. The regional breakdown is **Darwin (37%) Palmerston (22%) Rural (18%) Alice Springs & surrounding central schools (13%) Katherine (7%) Arnhemland (3%) and Tennant Creek & surrounding schools (2%).**

Parents responses to the question **"how often has your child(ren) been bullied at school?"**, **66 reported never, 61 reported once or twice, 37 reported two or three times a month, 20 reported about once a week** and finally, **a concerning 36 reported several times a week.**

**Q. How many people were involved in the bullying/harassment?**



Overwhelmingly, the majority of bullying/harassment was reported to occur **91%** of the time in the **playground/school yard**. The next highest was **In Class** at **51%**. **Waiting for the teacher before class** at **24%**; **Travelling to and from school** **20%**; **During Sport** **14%**; **Cyber (e.g. Facebook, Skype)** at **12%**; via **Mobile Phone** **5%** and via **email** **1%**.

The majority of bullying was being **called mean names and teased (84% response)** and/or **excluded on purpose (63% response)** and/or **hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around or locked indoors (53% response)**.

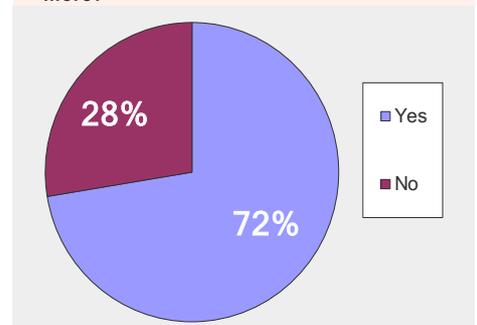
The majority of parents (**96%**) found out from their child that they were being bullied.

While **81%** of parents responded that they had an opportunity to talk to their school about any concerns regarding bullying/harassment, **a concerning 72% of respondents felt the school could have done more.**

Significantly, some **86%** of survey respondents felt that their **child(rens) school was generally a safe environment.**

The interim results of this survey will be provided at our COGSO meetings with the Education Minister Hon. Eva Lawler and Acting CE of Education Vicki Baylis. It reinforces the need for the Smiling Mind Program (see pages 4-5) to be rolled out across Northern Territory schools as part of the \$8m Labor election commitment to support students with a disability and students with challenging behaviours.

**Q. Do you feel the school could have done more?**



To complete this survey please visit  
[www.surveymonkey.com/r/FRQQ3NX](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FRQQ3NX)

# Hearing in Education for Learning Project (HELP)

Imagine sitting at school as a student with hearing loss and English as your second language, lost in your own world because the classroom acoustics simply don't enable you to hear your teacher.

Sadly, that is the case for almost half of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at any time. Yet as a society we wonder why these children aren't learning. **How do you learn when you simply can't hear?**

**The shocking statistics are known. Middle ear infection (Otitis Media) is the predominant cause of hearing loss and of the 4,371 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children and young people who received audiology services from July 2012 to June 2015 some 45% suffered hearing loss - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).**

**Assessments of children in remote communities show that up to 90% children suffer hearing loss.**

The current Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory heard that many of these children go on to dominate our child protection system and then into juvenile detention. It heard many then go on to adult prison.

Studies show that of our adult Aboriginal inmates in Alice Springs and Darwin correction systems, some 90% have suffered hearing loss.

The prevalence of middle ear infection (Otitis Media) has been studied for the past two decades and is common among Aboriginal people with increasing health resources drawn to tackling this disease of poverty.

**One of the problems has been a lack of structural changes to our schools to enable our children to hear during the periods of hearing loss. If you've ever had middle ear infection you'd know it's like trying to hear through a fog – the sound is muffled, words become indistinct. Add the dynamic that it's a second language you're trying to hear, and learn, in a noisy classroom and it becomes all the more challenging.**

**This has an impact on behaviour and learning outcomes.** Persistent and ongoing hearing loss in children impacts on literacy, learning, behaviour and communication skills.

While experts such as health workers, audiologists and psychologists for at least two decades have identified and studied the adverse effects of hearing loss on our children's ability to learn, little has changed to accommodate their needs in the classroom.

When the needs of children fall between the cracks of government departments it is parent advocacy that can make all the difference.

**At COGSO we listen carefully to what our parents are saying and translate that into strong policy.**

An East Arnhem region parent raised the issue of hearing loss with the COGSO Executive, saying it was one of the most significant issues facing Aboriginal children in their region.

COGSO's then Southern region representative, Fred Richardson, undertook some research in late September and met with NT School Support Services, Australian Hearing and NT Hearing Services and found that "it is quite clear that access to improved

services and treatment of hearing problems across the Territory ... has improved" and identified the Department of Education's Now Hear Continuum and the Department of Health's I-Hearing project as worthy undertakings.

The Now Hear Continuum gave a guide to schools to maximise the learning environment for students with hearing loss and the I-Hearing Project is developing a new web portal data system to track people with hearing loss.

**However, a significant unfunded gap remains in introducing structural changes to the acoustics of classrooms and Soundfield Amplification systems to create the right classroom listening conditions.**

To try and close this gap of significant disadvantage NT COGSO has included in its 2017/18 Budget Submission to the Northern Territory Government:

- **Establish a Working Party to deliver Hearing Loss Learning Innovations with the Department of Health, Department of Education, NT COGSO and Aboriginal Medical Services Association of the Northern Territory (AMSANT) representatives in January 2017.**
- **Establish a dedicated grant to deliver the roll-out of audio assessments and sound amplification systems across 10 schools in year 2017/18 as a priorities.**
- **That the Minister ensures the reinstatement and employment of additional Department of Education hearing staff to be based in all regions.**

The NT COGSO President Tabby Fudge has presented a paper to the Australian Council of State School Organisations recommending a multi-jurisdictional approach to lobbying all tiers of Government – Territory, State and Federal – as this is an issue that affects children across state and territory borders.

Our advocacy to deliver acoustic upgrades and soundfield amplification systems into our schools has become known as **Hearing in Education for Learning Project (HELP)** and we've been thrilled with the support of AMSANT, Deaf Children Australia and experts such as Dr Damien Howard who did

his PhD in the faculty of Education on Conductive Hearing Loss and Behaviour Problems Amongst Urban Indigenous Students in 2006.

The work to forge partnerships and advocate for the Working Party to ensure a co-operative approach to improving the lives of our students with hearing loss has begun and the early signs are promising.

**Sometimes, from little things, big things grow.**

**Imagine a child sitting at school in a classroom with acoustics that reduce noise and with a sound system amplifying the teacher so that they have no difficulty hearing and learning.**



*"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."*

Nelson Mandela

Planning for your child's future? Plan for a Good Education!

## NT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS CONSISTENTLY OUTPERFORM NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS WITH YEAR 12 RESULTS.

### 2015 Year 12 NT CET Individual Student Results

- |                          |                              |                        |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Darwin High School    | 6. Katherine High School     | 11. Non-Govt School    | 16. Darwin High School       |
| 2. Darwin High School    | 7. Non-Govt School           | 12. Darwin High School | 17. Darwin High School       |
| 3. Non-Govt School       | 8. Darwin High School        | 13. Non-Govt School    | 18. Non-Govt School          |
| 4. Katherine High School | 9. Darwin High School        | 14. Darwin High School | 19. Casuarina Senior College |
| 5. Darwin High School    | 10. Casuarina Senior College | 15. Non-Govt School    | 20. Non-Govt School          |

**Public Education: Best Value, Best Results, Best Choice!**



Do you see anyone you know, let us know!

*WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are warned that these images may contain deceased persons.*

Contact COGSO on 8999 3255 or email  
[enquiries@ntcogso.org.au](mailto:enquiries@ntcogso.org.au)

### New COGSO Executive

The COGSO AGM was held on 12th November.

Welcome to your elected representatives:

<b>President</b>	Tabby Fudge
<b>Vice President</b>	Robin Lawrence
<b>Treasurer</b>	Tooba Awais
<b>Arnhem Region</b>	Jeff Cook
<b>Barkly Region</b>	Wayne Green
<b>Darwin Region</b>	Noelene Armstrong
<b>Palmerston &amp; Rural Region</b>	Beverley Ratahi
<b>Southern Region</b>	John Adams
<b>Katherine Region</b>	Allan Kingsley

All of the representatives above attend the COGSO Executive Meetings where they bring to the table issues affecting schools in their regions.

**One Voice for Territory Public Education**  
COGSO encourages continual improvement in the provision of quality educational outcomes for all students in public education.