



## Effective Enrolment & Other Problems in NT Schools

### What is 'effective enrolment'?

In 2013 the NT Government introduced 'effective enrolment', an attendance-based school funding 'methodology'. Every year since, the funding received by NT government schools has been largely determined by a school's 'effective enrolment,' that is, a number derived from a school's attendance data from the previous year. 'Effective enrolment' is the number of students the NT Government will fund at each government school for the coming year. Government school budgets are calculated by multiplying their 'effective enrolment' by the NT Government's Student Needs Based Funding Formula. [A November 2022 ABC report](#) on 'effective enrolment' documents how this method of funding remote schools has impacted on the teaching and learning of students in remote NT community schools.

As a result of this attendance-based funding method, all remote government schools, and any urban schools with a large cohort of Indigenous students, have suffered large and ongoing funding cuts over the last ten years.

The NT is the only jurisdiction which uses attendance-based funding. All other jurisdictions in Australia fund government schools according to the number of enrolled students. Table A (see appendix) shows 2022 enrolment data and the 'effective enrolment' of thirteen remote NT government schools. Currently in these schools, only 60% of students are funded. **This means that 40%, or 1124 remote Indigenous students in these schools, are not receiving any funding at all from either the Commonwealth or the NT Government.**

### Impact of 'effective enrolment' on government schools

Since 'effective enrolment' was implemented, principals in remote schools have not been able to adequately staff schools. Staffing data from 2012<sup>1</sup> shows that in 2022 some remote schools have lost over half of their teaching staff<sup>2</sup>. (See staff photos above of Shepherdson College on Elcho Island from 2011 and 2021). Due to budgetary constraints, many school principals have also been forced to employ inexperienced (and less costly) teachers. **Critically, remote schools are struggling to staff classrooms with Assistant Teachers.** In Indigenous community schools, Assistant Teachers play a vital role in supporting the learning and well-being of students who speak Indigenous languages. Research has also shown that remote schools with [more ATs and Indigenous staff have better attendance rates](#). Although data is not available for urban schools, anecdotal information strongly indicates that 'effective enrolment' has had a significant impact on the funding of education and re-engagement programs for Indigenous students in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.



In Shepherdson College 2011 there were around 80 staff working at this remote school. In 2021 there were just over 40. This image appears in ATESOL NT's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance which is available on our website

<sup>1</sup> Estimate Committee Questions taken on notice, Ms Nicole Manison to Hon Peter Chandler Education [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/551091/8-11.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/551091/8-11.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 2012 staffing (see above) can be compared to My School 2021 data which freely available <https://www.myschool.edu.au/>



## Funding cuts via decreasing school budgets

Over the last ten years, ‘effective enrolment’ has seen the number of ‘funded students’ in NT schools decrease. This year at Lajamanu School, only 40% of students were funded. Table C also shows the decreasing number of ‘funded students’ between 2015-2021 for three remote schools in Arnhem Land. **All of these cuts to government school budgets in the NT have happened during a period in which the Commonwealth’s contribution to NT government schools has doubled. (See Table D).**

## ‘Effective enrolment’ and falling attendance rates of NT Indigenous students

At the same time as school budgets have been drastically reduced, there has also been a steep fall in the attendance rates of Indigenous students in NT government schools. As Table B shows, from 2013-20, in most regions outside of Darwin, Indigenous school attendance of year 7 students fell by 10- 27%.<sup>3</sup> As the number of funded students in schools has decreased, school principals have been forced to create larger and larger class roles, while art, sport and music have been drastically cut. Members of ATESOL NT frequently talk about their school not being able to fund school- based re-engagement programs. Since 2013, English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) specialist teacher positions have disappeared from both remote and urban schools.

## Secondary programs for Indigenous students in the NT

Due to inadequate budgets, the provision of secondary education to Indigenous students in both remote and urban schools has steeply declined. This is because many remote schools can no longer afford to staff secondary programs. The number of students returning from boarding schools and not enrolling at the local school, or students who have simply dropped out of secondary school, is deeply concerning. A 2020 study of one remote NT community found that of the eighty 12–18-year-olds in the community, ‘44% were not engaged in any form of education or training’.<sup>4</sup> In 2018 the NT had the lowest rate of retention from years 7 – 12 with only 31% of Indigenous students completing their secondary education, compared to the national average of 65%.<sup>5</sup>

## The NT Government’s reviews of ‘effective enrolment’

In 2017, a review of government school funding in the NT was conducted by Ernst and Young. Their report states:

*Schools where funding is reduced due to the application of effective enrolment are in remote locations, are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and have a high concentration of indigenous students (p. 33)*

Despite this, ‘effective enrolment’ was retained by the NT Government. Last year, [after ATESOL NT’s submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance was](#)

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<sup>3</sup> 2021, De Vincentiis B, Guthridge S, Su J-Y, Harding, M, Williams, T. Story of Our Children and Young People, Northern Territory, 2021. Darwin: Menzies School of Health Research, 2021, p 93. [https://cmc.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1061372/story-of-our-children-and-young-people-2021.pdf](https://cmc.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1061372/story-of-our-children-and-young-people-2021.pdf) 91-93

<sup>2</sup> 2021 O’bryan M, W Fogarty, *Boarding of Country*, p45 [https://caep.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/9/NT\\_Ed\\_Study\\_2020\\_7\\_Sept\\_1.pdf](https://caep.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/9/NT_Ed_Study_2020_7_Sept_1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Data obtained from figure 2.05.2 ‘Retention rates across the jurisdiction’ 2018 <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-05-education-outcomes-young-people>



[published](#), and [a story on effective enrolment was written by AAP](#), the Education Minister at that time, [Lauren Moss, announced a second review of 'effective enrolment'](#). This review was carried out by Deloitte earlier this year. ATESOL NT was consulted by the reviewers at the beginning of May and was told at that time that Deloitte's report would be finished by the end of May, but we have not heard anything since.

## **Government schools 2014-2022 - Where did the Gonski money go?**

Ten years ago, when the Gillard Government's passed the 2013 Education Act to legislate recommendations from the 2011 Gonski Review of School Funding, [Aboriginal students in the NT were supposed to receive more funding](#). In 2022, however, the reality is that due to NT Government school funding policies and 'effective enrolment', between 60-40% of Aboriginal students in remote schools are currently receiving no funding at all from either the Commonwealth or the NT Government.

Additional to the impact of 'effective enrolment', NT government schools receive only half of the funding which the My School website states these schools should be receiving. This is because in the NT 25-30% of the NT Government and the Commonwealth's contribution to government school funding is classified as 'indirect funding', which the NT Government states is used to fund education corporate services<sup>6</sup>. **This practice, as well as 'effective enrolment', explains why the My School financial data of remote NT government schools is around half what these schools receive in their budgets.**

## **Independent schools 2014-2022**

Over this same period, remote independent community schools and private schools in Darwin have seen large increases in their budgets. As Table E shows, since 2014 the Commonwealth's contribution to non-government schools in the NT has increased from 120 million to 216 million. This increase in funding has been received directly by independent schools whose budgets have more than doubled in the last eight years. As a result, in 2022 there are students in Darwin attending private schools who attract 2-3 times more government funding than Indigenous students in remote government schools.<sup>7</sup>

If you require more information, ATESOL NT is happy to meet with you to discuss 'effective enrolment' and its impact on the education and attendance rates of Aboriginal children and young people across the NT.

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<sup>6</sup> 2021 Written Question 275, questions 5, [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1088166/Answer-to-Written-Question-275.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1088166/Answer-to-Written-Question-275.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> This data can be validated by visiting the NT School Funding website (<https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/increasing-school-autonomy/school-funding>) where per student funding rate of Indigenous students *per effective enrolment* stands at around \$16 000 and comparing this to the per student funding of Darwin private schools on the My School website which shows funding for students at private schools in Darwin sitting at \$20 000 per students for schools with low Indigenous number and up to \$45 000 at schools with high number of Indigenous students.



## Appendix

**Table A: Enrolment data and the ‘effective enrolment’ of 13 remote Indigenous community schools.<sup>8</sup>**

This table shows the number of **enrolled students** in schools with 97-100% Indigenous students= **2,638**

Total **funded students** in schools with 97-100% Indigenous students = **1,514**

Total **unfunded student** in schools with 97-100% Indigenous students = **1124**

Arnhem schools and schools with bilingual programs	2021 enrolment data	2021 attendance data (%)	2021 effective enrolment	2022 % of funded students
Areyonga	37	55.1	29	78%
Baniyala Garrangali	32	55.0	34	100 %
Gapuwiyak	198	48.8	128	65%
Lajamanu	173	26.5	66	38%
Maningrida	481	39.3	281	58%
Milingimbi	275	33.2	110	40%
Numbulwar	123	36.6	74	60%
Ramingining	279	40.4	143	51%
Shepherdson	513	34.1	300	58%
Willowra	91	32.5	38	42%
Laynhapuy Homelands <sup>4</sup>	143	55.6	97	68%
Yirrkala School	103	46.1	96	93%
Yuendumu	190	37.9	118	62%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2638</b>		<b>1514</b>	<b>57%</b>

**Table B: Attendance of Indigenous year seven students by regions from 2013-2020**

Indigenous attendance of year 7 students in the NT <sup>9</sup>			
NT Region	2013	2020	Fall in attendance
Greater Darwin	82.5%	75.1%	-7.4%
Tope End	57.7%	40.8%	-16.9%
East Arnhem	52.7%	43.6%	-9.1%
Big Rivers	62.6%	52.2%	-10.4%
Barkly	72.5%	45.2%	27.3%
Central Australia	62.5%	60%	-2.5%

<sup>8</sup> 2022, Written Answer in Question No. 333 the NT Minister of Education to Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> 2021, De Vincentiis B, Guthridge S, Su J-Y, Harding, M, Williams, T. Story of Our Children and Young People, Northern Territory, 2021. Darwin: Menzies School of Health Research, 2021, p. 93



**Table C: The decreasing number of “funded students” (or effective enrolments) in three Arnhem community schools<sup>10</sup>.**

Remote School	Funded students/ ‘effective enrolment’		
	2015	2021	Decrease in funded students
Gapuwiyak	224	127	-97
Maningrida	400	300	-100
Shepherdson College	356	255	-101

**Table D: Contribution of the NT Government and the Commonwealth to NT Government Schools<sup>11</sup>**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>NTG</b>	486 735	471 186	448 158	474 356	436 664	476 297	446 635	444 337	466 262
<b>Federal</b>	103 724	163 500	170 107	190 323	187 858	249 617	238 545	244 540	238 988
<b>Total</b>	<b>590 459</b>	<b>634 686</b>	<b>618 265</b>	<b>664 679</b>	<b>624 522</b>	<b>725 914</b>	<b>685180</b>	<b>688 877</b>	<b>705 250</b>

**Table E: Contribution of the NT Government and the Commonwealth to NT Non-Government Schools<sup>12</sup>**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>NTG</b>	50 181	53 385	61 280	73 006	55 488	58 835	57 014	57 255	53 571
<b>Federal</b>	120 341	136 173	155 666	163 897	165 250	178 843	221 215	159 929	216 334
<b>Total</b>	<b>170 522</b>	<b>189 558</b>	<b>216 946</b>	<b>236 903</b>	<b>220 738</b>	<b>237 678</b>	<b>278 229</b>	<b>217 184</b>	<b>269 905</b>

<sup>10</sup> 2022, Written Answer to Question No, 344 from the NT Minister of Education, in Question 1b Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1131384/Answer-to-Written-Question-344.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1131384/Answer-to-Written-Question-344.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> This data was accessed from Department of Education Annual Reports 2014-2022 <https://education.nt.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>

<sup>12</sup> This data was accessed from Department of Education Annual Reports 2014-2022 <https://education.nt.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>