

4.0 Teaching & Learning

Teaching and learning are at the heart of all education. The Report identified that the quality of teaching and learning will make the essential difference to the educational achievements and future pathways of secondary age students across the Northern Territory. Good teachers and good teaching practices are critical to student learning. A comment that was frequently cited was that “teachers make the biggest difference to improving student learning”. The best schools are those with quality teachers to deliver programs to students.

Recommendations on Teaching and Support for Teachers received the most community support during the consultation process. There is broad agreement across all school communities and stakeholder groups that improving teaching and support for teaching professionals are paramount to improving educational outcomes for secondary students in the Northern Territory. Many believe that improving the quality of teaching would have a positive impact on student learning.

While pedagogies or teaching practices are the focus of improving teaching and learning, many of the submissions and comments from school communities and stakeholder groups found it difficult to focus solely on this topic alone. The subject of ‘good teaching’ was inextricably linked to the level of support for teachers. This was discussed at length by the community and is reflected in the submissions received.

Strong views were expressed during the community consultation throughout the Territory about the problems of support for and retention of teachers in the NT. There is a widely held view that teacher shortages will continue to worsen across Australia and internationally, and the problems are likely to be more acute for small remote communities. The turnover rate of teachers in remote areas is very high in a number of areas. There is general agreement that more needs to be done to attract and retain teaching professionals in the Northern Territory. Representatives from the AEUNT made reference to the large number of teachers who are due to retire in the next ten years and the need to replace these teachers.

While ‘Teaching and Learning’ are grouped together in the Report (see Chapter Three), we have separated issues around ‘support for teachers’ and ‘support for students’ to reflect the discussions that took place during the community consultation.

Interestingly, a common question that was expressed throughout the consultation process was why we are even bothering to discuss issues around supporting teachers. There was a general feeling that no one can argue against proposals that are aimed at providing more support for teachers and improving the quality of teaching. The community discussion has focused on **how** more support can be delivered and what is needed to resource it.

4.1 Support for Teachers

4.1.1 Submissions

The recommendations in the Report on teaching and support for teachers are included in Chapters 3, 9, 10 and 11.

Almost all of the submissions received made reference to recommendations on improving teaching and support for teachers. The submissions reflected the full range of stakeholders, as well as a wide representation of school communities across the Territory.

The list of submissions on the issue of teaching and support for teachers appears in Appendix II.

4.1.2 Value, Recognition and Well-being

There are four key areas that are of the greatest concern to teachers. They are respect, feeling valued, recognition and well-being. While they are difficult to quantify they are the most commonly cited comments about the problems facing teachers, particularly in the NT.

The subject of teacher well-being is extremely complex. This section is only a summary of the reflections and comments made during the consultation process.

We have heard that teachers feel undervalued, by their employer and by the community. We have also heard sentiments from more experienced teaching staff that the best teachers are those who hold the philosophy of what they can do for the community, rather than what the community can do for them.

A representative at the Nhulunbuy Education Discussion Forum reflected that those who choose to stay and teach in the NT do so because they have a strong sense that what they are doing is being valued and they are making a real difference to improving student learning. Recognition of the value of their contribution to society was regarded as one of the motivating factors to retain skilled teachers in the NT.

Teacher well-being is very much part of a school's well-being. Particularly in remote areas, those who feel a strong sense of connectedness with the community were more likely to stay. This is also connected with the way in which the community values education.

4.1.3 Professional Development

Adequate levels of relevant professional development for teachers are most commonly referred to as the key tool or mechanism to enhance good teaching. One representative summed this up by saying 'if teachers make the biggest difference to improving students' learning, then we should invest in our teachers'.

Different teachers have different training needs. Representatives from some school communities commented that as students are changing, many teachers are lacking knowledge on how their teaching styles can be adapted to meet the

changing students' needs. There is a strong desire for the NT, particularly from the teaching profession, to improve upon existing professional development practices and do more to engage teachers.

We have heard a number of concerns, particularly from the teaching community, about the lack of support for professional development for teachers, be it financial support or other such as allowing time off for teachers to undertake professional development. One suggestion is a model from South Australia where teaching staff are offered incentives, such as a shorter teaching year, to encourage staff to more proactively undertake professional development.

Another benefit of professional development for teachers, particularly in isolated communities, is the opportunity for them to network and learn from their peers. A suggestion on how this had been successfully done in the past was through moderation. Giving teachers opportunities to review and critique students' work was seen as a positive way to deliver professional development and improve the quality of teaching.

There was little discussion about the existing ways in which professional development for teachers is undertaken and whether there is any relationship between professional development and improvements in teaching and learning. However, the community has made some suggestions on how professional development for teachers can be linked to improvements in teaching and learning. One submission (s145) suggested that teachers undertaking professional development should develop an action plan to assess how this has assisted with teaching and learning practices.

There was extensive discussion in the community about where professional development could best take place, particularly in the context of remote Indigenous communities. While there is no one model that is appropriate for the whole NT, it was felt that some professional development should be undertaken 'on the ground' and that it should be culturally sensitive and community based.

Underpinning this is the issue of funding. There is broad agreement among members of school communities and stakeholder groups that professional development is essential to improving teaching. All agree that this needs to be resourced adequately.

4.1.4 Teaching and Learning (Pedagogical) Framework

Overall, we received very positive feedback on the recommendation on the Teaching and Learning Framework. Respondents support the notion of developing a Teaching and Learning Framework to assist schools and professionals in implementing the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF). However, some respondents have expressed concerns that the proposed Teaching and Learning Framework may mean changes to the NTCF.

There was general consensus that DEET should build pedagogical capacity. Again, the issue of resourcing is at the heart of much of the comment received on this issue. Developing and implementing new pedagogy is complicated and would require resources to assist teachers with the changes.

ANTSEL (s10) claims that “no single element of teacher practice can make a greater difference than sound pedagogy. Teachers need a growing knowledge and skill base to meet the needs of young people.”

However, not everyone agrees with ANTSEL on the priority placed on pedagogy. The Australian College of Educators’ submission (s15) noted that issues of pedagogy and the quality of teachers are scarcely relevant when so many young people are disengaged from the education system.

4.1.5 Financial Incentives

Beyond the realm of improved professional development, a number of submissions and comments made during the consultation process have raised the importance of providing additional incentives for teachers. Again, more urgency and importance were placed on this in remote communities. We came across some sentiments about the uneven nature of distribution of funding in the teaching profession.

Teacher salaries were often cited as a deterrent and impediment to attracting and retaining skilled teaching professionals in the NT. It is interesting that views are somewhat mixed about whether financial incentives, such as improving teachers salaries, are the key to increasing the retention rate of teachers in the Territory.

There is a view that financial incentives may, in some cases, work against attracting the right people for the job, i.e. that people are teaching for the wrong reason. Others assert that teachers should receive a salary that ‘reflects what they do’ and their contribution to society.

Improving the quality of housing in rural and remote areas, better travel allowances to enable professional development and more flexible workplace arrangements were most commonly cited as incentives that could attract and retain quality teaching staff in the NT, particularly in remote areas.

4.1.6 Support for remote Indigenous communities

Problems in the level of support for teachers in remote Indigenous communities are more acute than in urban or regional areas. The circumstances and conditions in remote communities are unique and are generally more difficult than those of urban or regional areas. Many felt that teachers are generally not well-equipped with the right levels of training and support to live and teach on remote Indigenous communities. The cultures of these communities are foreign to many teachers and communication is often a problem.

To address these issues, representatives from school communities have made numerous suggestions on how this could be improved. They included better, more relevant orientation complemented by ongoing support and targeted professional development for staff in remote Indigenous communities. These are discussed in other sections in this chapter.

Improved travel allowance to Darwin or regional centres to undertake professional development was seen as a positive measure to improving teacher well-being in remote Indigenous communities. It was felt that this could provide

more opportunities to network and break down some of the isolation as a result of geographic locations.

Conditions of housing and the quality of accommodation in remote areas for teaching staff were generally considered very poor. Issues of safety and security need to be addressed. The majority of views supported additional resources in this area to make the necessary improvements.

4.1.7 Orientation

Issues around orientation were discussed at length outside the Darwin/urban setting. This is perhaps a reflection of the different needs outside of urban areas and more importantly, the uniqueness of remote Indigenous settings.

There was broad agreement that orientation of new teachers can make a difference to whether teaching staff stay in the long term. Teachers at the Education Discussion Forums shared their experiences with orientation in the NT.

There was no consensus on **how long** orientation should take place. One view is that one week is more than sufficient in terms of orientation (*'New teachers have to come to terms with so much new information that they suffer from information overload! They can't realistically retain any more information than is given to them in a week'*). A contrasting view was that orientation should be ongoing and suggested that six months may be a more appropriate length of time (*'You are still finding your feet in the first six months'*). One submission (s19) noted that, in remote Indigenous communities, orientation is not just about teaching. It is about an adjustment to lifestyle. A phasing-in period with a reduced teaching load, similar to that of an intern program, to assist new teachers to settle in could potentially reduce the high rates of turnover currently experienced in the Northern Territory. Regardless of the length of time required for orientation, it was felt that all new teachers, particularly those who are going to teach in remote communities, should receive appropriate orientation.

Similarly, there was no agreement on **where** the orientation should take place. Some suggested that orientation could take place in a central location, such as Darwin or a regional centre where resources are available. This provides the opportunity for new teachers to meet their peers and build networks. Others suggested that orientation should be based in the community. It was felt that this was particularly important in building awareness and appreciation of the unique culture, language and school community as well as the broader community. Local expertise was regarded as essential to helping new teachers familiarise with their new environments. The uniqueness of each individual school or community may necessitate looking at different people or 'champions' to undertake the orientation.

4.1.8 Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

Increasingly ICT is regarded as a necessary component of teaching practices. In rural and remote communities, teachers rely on different aspects of ICT to deliver their teaching or as a support for face-to-face teaching.

One of the key issues raised during the consultation process was the need for teaching staff to receive adequate training in ICT. Some older teachers in particular described their difficulties in dealing with the technology. Teachers also complained about LATIS. They want the service improved and they need the skills to manage it.

Government initiatives on improving ICT were generally applauded. However, some questions were raised with respect to why money is not spent 'on the ground' to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Technology was regarded as a resource, a support or a tool at best (s132). These sentiments do not necessarily reflect negatively on the initiatives but rather highlighted the difference in priorities.

4.1.9 Other

There are a number of related issues raised during the consultation process that are worthy of discussion.

Firstly, the issue of Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEP) was discussed in a number of submissions from school communities, predominantly from teaching professionals. There is widespread concern outside the Darwin area that TEPs are not fairly distributed. It is said that over two-thirds of TEPs are located in three schools – Darwin High School, Casuarina Senior College and NTOEC - and only one across all of the remote schools.

There is general support for TEPs to continue, in particular their role as leaders for good pedagogy and curriculum implementation. However, there is some negativity towards the proposal to distribute TEPs in a Learning Precinct context. It is unclear whether this antipathy is towards Learning Precincts or the more general notion that there should be a greater sharing of TEPs. There are also some concerns over the proposed changes to the role of TEPs.

Secondly, comments from school communities and stakeholder groups have indicated strong support for increasing the number of para-professionals and support staff in schools to assist teachers. Teachers alone can only do so much to improve student learning. The right mix of teachers and para-professional staff was regarded as essential to building a school community that fosters and supports a healthy learning environment. Para-professionals are generally regarded as important assets of schools. Concerns about attracting and retaining quality para-professionals in the Northern Territory secondary education system have been raised in a similar way as the teaching staff.

Thirdly, teachers and principals have raised questions about the current staffing formulas and how they do not necessarily reflect the varying staffing needs of schools in different contexts. The issue of reducing class sizes was also regularly raised by members of the community as a way for teachers to have more capacity to deal with students.

4.2 Recommendations

The following are recommendations in the Secondary Education Report that specifically pertain to support for teachers in the context of Teaching and Learning. A brief commentary has been provided for each recommendation to indicate the community's response to the recommendation. **Please note:** Where a recommendation refers to schools and learning precincts, general community support refers only to their implementation in schools and should not imply any general acceptance of learning precincts.

Recommendation	Commentary
<p>1. as a matter of priority, NT DEET develop a Teaching and Learning Framework that defines the essential features of good pedagogies and aligns curricula and assessment practices with this Framework, for approval by the NT Board of Studies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation. • Supporters of the NTCF are concerned that the development of a Teaching and Learning Framework will mean changes to the NTCF.
<p>2. NT DEET continue and expand its support for special pedagogies and resources to enhance teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for secondary students with special needs including boys and girls, those at risk in literacy and numeracy, those with disabilities and gifted and talented students • through ICT and the new technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation.
<p>4. NT DEET invite the Australian Information Industry Association to be a partner in developing and funding at least one Lighthouse School in a remote precinct, as a beginning of increased support and development of ICT pedagogy and practice in remote schools NT wide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation. • Some comments were raised as to whether this is a high order priority.

<p>5. to improve the quality of teaching and learning, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assist principals of schools or heads of precincts to establish professional learning communities where teachers and teaching support staff develop, trial, evaluate and share teaching and learning practices based on the essential features of good pedagogy established in the Teaching and Learning Framework• establish a Research and Innovation Unit to facilitate and support the development of Research and Innovation Circles with research support from other relevant providers such as the School of Social Research and Policy at Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE). The purpose of these Circles is to explore teaching and learning models that go beyond the boundaries of accepted or traditional pedagogies and test new ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is general support for this recommendation.• The establishment of professional learning communities received very strong support. Respondents overwhelmingly supported Professional Learning Communities regardless of whether Learning Precincts will be established. In fact, the majority of comments indicated that Professional Learning Communities should be kept separate from Learning Precincts. Respondents spoke of the need for Professional Learning Communities to be properly resourced. One submission said that Professional Learning Communities would not work if formation/participation is mandated.• Research and Innovation Unit – mixed responses were received on this proposal. There is a perception that this was not necessary.
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<p>23. in order to strengthen the role of Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEPs) and to allow for equitable distribution of TEP expertise across the system, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • redefine the roles and responsibilities of TEPs to include precinct-wide responsibilities for good pedagogy and curriculum implementation, and assuming a structured and systematic role in mentoring student teachers • examine and review as appropriate the application process and selection criteria for becoming a TEP • review the accountability arrangements across the three TEP levels • provide opportunities for the strategic placement of TEPs in schools, with a view to making the system more effective in the Learning Precinct context and to providing for a more equitable distribution of TEPs across the system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for TEPs. • Concerns were raised with respect to changes to placement of TEPs in schools and reference to TEPs in Learning Precincts. • Mixed responses were received regarding the redefinition of roles of TEPs. • In Darwin, they do not want to see the ‘forced’ movements of TEPs.
<p>26. to maintain the quality and professional standards of teachers, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define the roles and responsibilities of secondary teachers in the Northern Territory as outlined in Chapter 5, in order to differentiate between those who teach in the later middle years (Years 7–9), and those who teach in the senior years (Years 10–12) • define the roles and responsibilities common to NT secondary teachers in all years and all disciplines • require schools, where necessary, to provide professional development for teachers so that that they are sufficiently prepared to fulfil these roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of roles and responsibilities for NT secondary teachers was regarded as a positive measure and received general support. • However, some teachers are concerned that differentiation in the stages of schooling may limit their mobility between middle years and senior years. • Initiatives to provide professional

	<p>development for teachers were strongly supported.</p>
<p>27. to allow for more flexibility in staffing arrangements to meet the changing needs of students, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with relevant groups and Government agencies towards a simplified, consistent system of training, funding and employment of support staff in schools and precincts, and to develop more efficient ways of those groups and agencies cooperating with DEET to support young people's needs • consult with schools, learning precincts and unions to establish staffing requirements at the local level to implement the new arrangements outlined in this report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation. • The key issue raised with respect to this recommendation is funding and adequate resourcing. • Some schools would like to see more flexibility and autonomy to make decisions about how schools are staffed. • Support staff would depend on local area of need.
<p>28. in order to recruit, retain and value teachers, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a strategic recruitment unit to act as an agency for all schools and precincts in the Territory, to provide a pool of recruits for appointment to all positions that are created or become vacant. This service is to be forward looking to meet current and future needs as identified in close consultation with the schools and precincts • require that this recruitment unit set in place, as a matter of urgency, a recruitment strategy targeting areas of shortage such as skills in literacy and numeracy teaching in secondary schools, mathematics, ICT, technology and enterprise and vocational learning • investigate, adapt and implement a model of induction to parallel the new pedagogy required by this report, including setting up probationary and mentoring mechanisms to meet the needs of the new learning precincts • expand the range of incentives to attract and keep teachers in the Territory, and to acknowledge their professional contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation. • Many submissions raised the value of establishing a centralised unit to develop targeted recruitment strategies as well as investigate opportunities and models to attract and retain teachers and support staff in the Territory. • In terms of how this can be done, one suggested paying closer attention to the sorts of positions the NT is recruiting for

	<p>positions the NT is recruiting for and be proactive in seeking out those specific skills and abilities in potential teachers (s89).</p>
<p>29. to improve the quality of and take a more strategic approach to pre-service training, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with schools and learning precincts, and with relevant providers, especially CDU and BIITE, to develop and implement a more rigorous and strategic approach to pre-service teacher training and training support staff to prepare them for the new pedagogical and other requirements arising from this review • approach the Commonwealth to fund ten scholarships for the Territory each year for the next five years for suitable Indigenous people to train as secondary teachers • require that the NT Government's Teacher Bursary program give priority to applicants seeking to train in areas of shortage in secondary schools • work with CDU and BIITE to establish a fast-tracking teacher-training program for areas where there is an identified teacher shortage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation.
<p>30. to improve the quality and relevance of professional development, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with schools and precincts, and with relevant providers to give priority to the DEET Workforce Development Strategy 2003- 2005, and implement a professional learning communities approach to professional development for all staff employed in secondary education • prioritise later middle years pedagogies, literacy and numeracy teaching, maths, ICT skills, enterprise and vocational teaching skills and cross cultural effectiveness training, for professional development of secondary staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong support for this recommendation. • Teachers are particularly supportive of priority placed on professional development.

<p>34. as a matter of priority the NT Government develop a strategic approach to the provision of accommodation and transport for education staff working in remote areas that is equivalent to that offered by other agencies and is responsive to changing needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong support for this recommendation. • We were given many examples where police and health officers were provided with much better housing and support than teachers.
<p>36. to improve student and teacher access to and use of ICT, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • divide its ICT section into two parts: one to manage the administration requirements of the department and schools; the other to support schools in developing appropriate pedagogy, materials and online services to assist in teaching the curriculum wherever secondary education is taking place, with this second group moving to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division • work closely with each school and Learning Precinct to enhance ICT and to develop their effectiveness as users for normal communication within the school and precinct, and with the department • require the schools or Learning Precincts to prepare a plan so that all members of staff are skilled in ICT use and undertake all normal communication via this medium by the commencement of the 2007 teaching year • require the schools or Learning Precincts to develop an ICT strategic plan for the introduction and consolidation of ICT in its pedagogy, materials and on-line services • make provision so that each individual teacher in every NT secondary school has ready access to a new computer, via a computer on each full time teacher's desk, and so that each teacher knows how to use it by the beginning of the 2007 teaching year • make provision for effective maintenance and industry standard software upgrade to keep all computers operating effectively • seek Commonwealth funding so that all secondary education providers in the NT have access to adequate bandwidth • make provision for ICT service support in secondary schools to enable effective interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for this pertains largely to the principles behind this recommendation and an acknowledgement that improvements need to be made on ICT. There were very few comments on the details of this recommendation. • Teachers constantly complained about LATIS. They want the service improved. And they need the skills to manage it.

<p>distance learning and Internet access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take note of and implement findings of current Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) projects under way, including the Business Viability Study and the Mobile Education and Training Project. 	
<p>37. in order to achieve better ICT services through aggregated bandwidth, the NT Government require that all its sectors and agencies work together to support online access centres in regional and remote communities and to enable these community facilities to remain viable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is strong support for this recommendation.
<p>38. NT DEET establish a Teaching and Learning Support Division by bringing together and restructuring the existing units or functions that focus on the provision of quality services to students and to schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally the community believes that it is the responsibility of the Minister and DEET to work out how DEET should organise itself to best meet the community's aspirations for education. • The community would like to see improved educational outcomes as a result of restructuring, i.e. not restructuring for restructuring sake.

4.3 Community Ideas

An overwhelming majority of respondents who commented on the areas of teaching and support for teachers supported or gave in-principle support for the recommendations in this section of the Report. There is strong support for innovations that have been properly trialled and resourced to improve learning outcomes for students.

The establishment of Professional Learning Communities and improved professional development were regarded as the highest priorities

The community sees great opportunities to invest in teachers. Any questions or concerns about the recommendations in this area are centred around the issue of funding. It is not a question of **whether** the government should do more about improving the quality of teaching and providing greater levels of support to teachers. The community **expects** this to happen. The question is **how** the government will resource initiatives and programs to support teaching professionals.

Orientation and ongoing support

A further suggestion raises the possibility of combining an initial short (one-week) orientation ‘in town’ with ongoing orientation at the school for a further 6 – 12 months. Adequate professional development was regarded as essential beyond the initial period for all of the above suggestions to ensure that teachers are provided with the right level of support to improve overall teacher well-being.

A long-term strategic plan to address teacher retention

The community feels strongly that priority should be placed on retaining teachers in the Northern Territory. More needs to be done to ensure that teachers are given the appropriate recognition and respect they deserve. A respondent suggested a long term strategic plan is needed to address issues of teacher retention. For this to succeed, the plan should be developed and owned by the schools and community. Sufficient time should also be allowed to implement the plan.

The solution for the Northern Territory is probably a combination of financial and non-financial incentives. While competitive salaries and appropriate allowances are needed, there is a need to address those elements that are not quantifiable – that is, community respect, value and recognition of teachers.

Some felt that more can be done to promote the Northern Territory as a good place to teach.

In a small number of submissions, the community noted the importance for teachers to feel that there are long term career prospects (s136). It was felt that while there is talk about pathways for students, it is just as important to discuss pathways for teachers (s84).

4.4 Support for Students

The community agrees that good educational outcomes for students are the ultimate goal. What makes teaching 'good' is the learning that students can get out of it. We have heard comments from students in the Alice Springs Education Discussion Forum that teachers are not the ones who make the biggest difference to student learning. Good teaching does not count for much if students are not willing to learn.

4.4.1 Develop programs that support students' learning needs

A number of submissions have expressed the need to develop programs that are relevant and targeted at meeting the learning needs of students. One respondent summed this up by commenting on how we should stop making children fit the schools, but rather make the schools adapt to the students' needs.

It is crucial that students have access to the broadest range of programs available. Every student is different and a flexible and responsive education system is needed to ensure that students' learning needs are catered for.

This is also discussed in Chapter 5: Curriculum.

4.4.2 Individual Learning Profiles

The concept of developing Individual Learning Profiles was generally supported by school communities. Parents and students are particularly supportive of this. There are strong views about how Individual Learning Profiles will help engage parents directly about students' learning. Teachers have also raised the importance of developing Individual Learning Profiles, particularly in light of mobility of students in the NT. For example, an Individual Learning Profile could go a long way to assist teachers in providing the appropriate level of teaching to a new student. It was also felt that these profiles will inform and guide more relevant teaching practices for students.

However, concerns were raised with respect to the amount of additional time and administrative work that this may create. Some submissions have highlighted this as a 'huge ask' for teachers in remote communities. Concerns were expressed over the additional administrative burden this could add to already heavy workloads for teachers.

4.4.3 Pathways for Students and Non-Academic Support: greater access to careers advisers, counsellors and psychologists

Comments received during the consultation process indicated strong support for developing pathways for students. In its submission, the Northern Territory Youth Affairs Network (s96) says that the Report raised concerns about ratios of support staff yet the recommendations did not go far enough to address the concerns that were raised.

There is an overwhelming support for secondary students to have greater access to counsellors and psychologists to improve the social and emotional well-being of secondary students. These sentiments were strongly expressed during Phase One of the consultation process. A commonly held view expressed at the time was that this is one of the highest order priorities.

Providing greater access for students to these types of professional support should be done even if nothing else from the Report is acted upon.

Some submissions, particularly those from the primary school sector as well as some individuals, indicate that students need support for their social, emotional and psychological well-being at a much earlier age. The benefit of early intervention is commonly cited as the reason why primary aged students should also have access to these professionals. To this end, they would like to see equal or, at least, improved access to professional support for primary aged students.

Similarly, career advisers were regarded as important in providing assistance to students to identify relevant pathways. Strong support was received for students to have access to careers advisers, particularly from Year 10 onwards. It was felt that this will also help students see **why** they are at school and could potentially improve retention rates.

4.4.4 Support for students with special needs

The definition of special needs is very broad. It includes both students with disabilities and those who are gifted. There is also some debate about the differences between students with high support needs versus special needs. There were some concerns that gifted and talented students are often overlooked and not supported. It was felt that the current level of support was only tokenistic.

Although we only received a relatively small number of submissions highlighting the issues of students with special needs, this is an area that received support during the discussions we had with school communities in the consultation process. Sections of the community were critical of the Report in that only one recommendation mentioned students with special needs, yet the Report itself highlighted that the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of students with special needs in Australia.

4.4.5 Community ownership

Representatives from school communities agree that *different* students in *different* communities have *different* needs. The community would like to see an education system that is flexible enough to cater for these differences.

Parents' ability to readily access information on their students' learning was considered very important. However, others suggest that access is simply not enough. To effectively improve students' learning, genuine engagement with parents is fundamental. This is important in urban, rural and remote settings but there is a more urgent need to engage parents in Indigenous communities. Partnerships with parents were considered vital to improving student learning outcomes.

Communities need to drive and own their secondary education. In the Tennant Creek Education Discussion Forum, we heard that the onus should be on communities to look at what they need for their secondary education as a first step. This does not preclude the need for government support. We have heard success stories in remote communities where good educational outcomes have been achieved because the entire community is committed to supporting the students. School communities and some stakeholder groups see much value in harnessing the opportunities in this area.

4.5 Recommendations

The following are recommendations in the Secondary Education Report that specifically pertain to support for students in the context of Teaching and Learning. A brief commentary has been provided for each recommendation to indicate the community's response to the recommendation.

Recommendation	Commentary
<p>3. NT DEET require every NT school to collect relevant data so that every student has a Learning Profile available on the Integris database which records their progress as a learner, detailing any special learning needs, attendance, achievements at the Band levels of the NTCF and MAP test results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of collecting relevant data and developing Learning Profiles is supported. • However, concerns have been raised with respect to the time and effort required of teachers to develop these Profiles and whether additional resourcing will be available.
<p>12. to monitor and support student learning and career pathways in the senior years and students' transition from school to employment, further training or higher education, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require that schools and Learning Precincts provide pathways mentorship to each student in the senior years and for up to one year after completion, to advise on and manage student progress through their chosen learning and career pathways • provide funding as part of the Precinct Establishment Grant or through separate funding to schools and precincts, for training of current staff, and for para-professional support to ensure that each precinct is able to meet its responsibilities to provide pathways mentoring to all senior students • require that a Futures Portfolio be developed by each student with assistance from the pathways mentor, to record their achievements and provide a specific plan for their future pathway • require that the Learning Profile be extended at Year 10 to record student career and learning pathways during their senior years • require schools to collect destination data one year after students have completed their schooling, and this data be provided to DEET for system-level decision making and reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation provided that it is not conditional upon the establishment of Learning Precincts. • However, the issue of resourcing is commonly cited as one that requires further clarification.

<p>13. to develop the capacity of schools and precincts to meet the complex and varied educational, social and emotional needs of students, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make provision so that every secondary school has a counsellor or access to a counsellor to meet the social and emotional needs of students • make provision so that each learning precinct as it is established will have at least one psychologist experienced in working with young people • make provision so that every secondary school has at least one careers adviser or access to careers advice, and require that these advisers lead the Pathways Mentorship program described in Chapter 5. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is overwhelming support for this recommendation as it applies to schools or groups of schools such as clusters, but not precincts. • Additional comments have been made about the need for early intervention, thus, access to these professionals for primary aged students as well as secondary aged students.
<p>24. to recognise and nurture the range of gifts and talents demonstrated by young Territorians, the NT Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish scholarships and mentoring programs for young people with talent or initiative, or who show signs of potential high achievement in a variety of areas of endeavour such as academic pursuits, enterprise, business, industry, the arts, music and community participation • establish various Young Territorian Awards to recognise outstanding achievement by secondary school students in a variety of areas, not just academic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation. • This recommendation did not generate much discussion.
<p>25. to extend opportunities for young people and parents to assume a range of roles in educational forums and participate in decision making, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a Chief Executive's Student Forum, perhaps modelled on the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians, to obtain direct input from young people about the education system • assist schools and precincts to develop specific programs for young people to prepare them to undertake leadership and support roles in their own communities • assist schools and learning precincts to develop specific programs to increase the knowledge, skills and experience of parents and teachers in working together to enhance young people's learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation to give students a voice. • NTYAN supports this but cautions that it may exclude alienated students. • Submissions have also commented that there is lots of expertise that DEET can draw upon for Dot Point 3 to look at

	<p>opportunities to expand and build on existing networks.</p>
<p>36 to improve student and teacher access to and use of ICT, NT DEET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • divide its ICT section into two parts: one to manage the administration requirements of the department and schools; the other to support schools in developing appropriate pedagogy, materials and online services to assist in teaching the curriculum wherever secondary education is taking place, with this second group moving to the new Teaching and Learning Support Division • work closely with each school and Learning Precinct to enhance ICT and to develop their effectiveness as users for normal communication within the school and precinct, and with the department • require the schools or Learning Precincts to prepare a plan so that all members of staff are skilled in ICT use and undertake all normal communication via this medium by the commencement of the 2007 teaching year • require the schools or Learning Precincts to develop an ICT strategic plan for the introduction and consolidation of ICT in its pedagogy, materials and on-line services • make provision so that each individual teacher in every NT secondary school has ready access to a new computer, via a computer on each full time teacher's desk, and so that each teacher knows how to use it by the beginning of the 2007 teaching year • make provision for effective maintenance and industry standard software upgrade to keep all computers operating effectively • seek Commonwealth funding so that all secondary education providers in the NT have access to adequate bandwidth • make provision for ICT service support in secondary schools to enable effective interactive distance learning and Internet access • take note of and implement findings of current Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) projects under way, including the Business Viability Study and the Mobile Education and Training Project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is general support for this recommendation (aspects relating to teachers have been addressed in the previous section). • Support for this pertains largely to the principles and an acknowledgement that improvements need to be made on ICT. There were very few comments on the details of this recommendation.

4.6 Community Ideas

The community was supportive of initiatives that are aimed at improving students' learning outcomes as well as addressing the needs of their social and emotional well-being.

While support for students was regarded as a critical issue, in remote communities, this is overshadowed by the more global concern of the apparent inability to engage Indigenous students in secondary education.

The community has suggested looking beyond the schools settings and providing a greater range of leadership opportunities for students to engage with society. These could be through employment, business and/or government. It was also felt that employers can play a much greater role by speaking to students at schools and offering more opportunities to students.