



## A New Direction for Distance Education in the Territory

The Territory Government is committed to providing the best quality teaching and learning opportunities for all students – no matter where they live. Distance learning is an integral part of education in the Northern Territory.

As part of the Building Better Schools initiative – a \$42 million four year plan to improve secondary education in the Territory for all students – including the commitment to develop a leading edge distance education service. This new \$12 million per year service will commence in 2007.

Over the past 12 months, this commitment has seen the continued development of the Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) facilities for the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). This was showcased most recently with the opening of a state-of-the-art Interactive Distance Learning studio at Katherine School of the Air.

### A new direction for 2007 – The Northern Territory Distance Learning Service

The next step is the creation and roll-out of a new distance education model – a model that will enhance the delivery of education services to students and distance education schools and communities across the Territory, and contribute towards better outcomes for our students.

The improved model will be known as the Northern Territory Distance Learning Service (NTDLS), and is the culmination of expert research and in-depth consultation with teachers, parents, the Australian Education Union, and other appropriate stakeholders.

NTDLS will be ready for the start of the 2007 school year.

### More direct support for teachers and students in our remote schools

The new model will see the establishment of Regional Learning Agents – distance education teachers based in remote schools/communities. This will facilitate more direct support for teachers and students in remote schools.

### Streamlined service

The NTDLS will bring together the existing Northern Territory Open Education Centre (NTOEC), Katherine School of the Air and the Alice Springs School of the Air. The new streamlined service will improve the quality and effectiveness of distance education, and will see improvements in technology and interactive learning, in sourcing and developing teaching and learning materials, and most importantly, in the delivery of service to our students.

### Improved curriculum materials and teaching resources

A \$1 million annual budget has been allocated to develop, purchase and refine teaching and curriculum materials for distance education students under the NTDLS. A new Distance Learning Materials and ICT innovation unit has been established. This unit will enhance and develop these materials specifically for the Territory context and for Indigenous learners. It will take advantage of new technologies and embrace contemporary teaching and learning practices.

### New equipment for home-based students

Funding has been allocated to replace existing Interactive Distance Learning computers for our current students and also for the purchase of an additional 60 computers – to extend the service to home-based students.

### Virtual school trial

The NTDLS will trial a 'virtual school' at an urban or regional high school or secondary college, in which new technology will enable teachers to deliver lessons in real-time and online to students across the NT.

### Katherine School of the Air – reaching Years 8 and 9

Katherine School of the Air will begin a two-year trial to extend the delivery of educational services to Year 8 and 9 students for the first time.

## MOVING THE TERRITORY AHEAD



## Your Questions Answered

### **When will I know how the new arrangements for the Distance Learning Service will affect me?**

Over the next four weeks, DEET will work with the relevant unions on the change management process. You will be advised of the details of how the decision affects you as soon as possible after that. In the meantime, if you have any queries, you are invited to contact Chris Hancock, Human Resources Director Building Better Schools, on telephone 8901 4995 or mobile 0401 119 166.

### **What support is available to me throughout this change process?**

This dedicated Human Resources Director is available to help with any questions about staff wellbeing and employment conditions matters arising from implementation of the Northern Territory Distance Learning Service.

### **Will counselling services be available?**

Yes. Confidential counselling support is available through employee assistance programs. For further information please contact Chris Hancock, the Human Resources Director on 8901 4995.

### **What will happen if the NT Open Education Centre has more staff than positions at my level for 2007?**

If you are a teacher, the annual transfer round is the first step in the process and this has been brought forward this year to allow staff the time and support to ensure a smooth transition during the implementation process. If necessary, the Displacement Procedures as agreed in the Teachers and Educators Certified Agreement 2005 will apply.

If you are an Executive Teacher or in a non-teaching position, the procedures for filling of vacancies arising from substantial change set out in your Certified Agreement will be followed. DEET will work with the appropriate unions to reach agreement over precisely how these procedures are applied in relation to the NTOEC.

In general terms, the Certified Agreements provide that, where DEET, the Commissioner for Public Employment and the relevant union agree, staff whose jobs or functions remain unchanged can be transferred to a similar or like job within DEET. This means that where there is one vacancy and only one suitable officer, that officer can be matched against the position.

If NTOEC loses more than one position at a particular level, whether Executive Teachers or non-teaching positions, expressions of interest will be called for all of the positions at that level in the school. Only existing staff in the school at that level are eligible to apply for these vacancies. Selection panels assess applicants on merit in the usual way, including interviews where necessary, to compare the relative merit of applicants.

It is proposed that, once this process has been completed, officers who have not won a position at their level in their school will be able to apply to be matched to any remaining vacancies at level within DEET.

Executive Teachers or non-teaching staff who do not win a position in the change process will be referred to the DEET Placement Committee and be afforded priority consideration for vacancies.

### **If I don't win a position in the new structure at my level, what will happen to me?**

If you are an Executive Teacher or in a non-teaching role, the Placement Committee will regularly review your situation and ensure that you are given priority consideration for suitable vacancies. If you remain unplaced for a long period of time because you do not win positions to which you are referred, or because you decline suitable vacancies, on advice from the Placement Committee, the Chief Executive may place you in a suitable vacancy at your level as allowed for in the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (Section 35).



### **If I am on a temporary contract, what will happen to me?**

DEET will work closely with temporary contract employees and their relevant union and the Commissioner for Public Employment to progress this matter in order to clarify individual status by the end of Term 3, 2006. Ongoing employment within NTOEC will depend on the final structure and job design.

### **What is the process for the annual teacher transfer round? Can I still apply to transfer through that process?**

The timeline and process for teacher transfers for 2007 is set out below. If you are a teacher at NTOEC you will be able to apply to transfer through this process.

24 July 2006	A memo will be sent to all teachers inviting applications for teacher transfer in 2007. This year, applications will be completed on-line.
25 August 2006	Closing date for teacher applications for transfer.
From 28 August to 22 September 2006	The annual teacher transfer round will be conducted.
Week commencing 25 September 2006	All teachers will be advised of the results of their transfer application for 2007.

### **How are the needs of staff on long leave, or on long-term higher duties addressed in the change process?**

Each person's situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the individual and the relevant union. The current Certified Agreements detail how this will occur. Clause 20 of the Teachers and Educators Certified Agreement and Clause 17 of the 'General' Agreement refer.

#### **For further information:**

- NTPS 2005 – 2007 Teachers and Educators Certified Agreement – Clause 20  
[www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/eba/2005\\_teachers](http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/eba/2005_teachers)
- NTPS 2004 – 2007 Certified Agreement – Clause 17 [www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/eba/200501\\_ntps](http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/eba/200501_ntps)
- Public Sector Employment and Management Act – Section 35  
[http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public\\_sector/psem\\_act.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public_sector/psem_act.shtml)
- Chris Hancock, HR Director Building Better Schools ph 8901 4995 or 0401 119 166

