



Yes vote and emergency action can turn around remote education train wreck

The Central Land Council has called on the federal government to act quickly and decisively to end the Northern Territory's remote education crisis.

"We need federal action to prevent a total collapse of the NT's remote government education system which is starved of funds and unable to support the needs of all children," CLC chief executive Les Turner said.

"We call on the Albanese government to bridge the scandalous education gap with an immediate emergency equity package that ensures our students are funded to the same level as students in the rest of the country from the start of next school year.

"It needs to use all levers, including \$175 million in emergency funding for the next two years, to get the NT government to fund schools based on enrolment from next January."

The Territory has bloated its education bureaucracy and starved remote government schools by funding schools based on attendance, rather than enrolment, since 2015.

It spends on average 20 per cent less on the education of NT children than the minimum spent on students everywhere else.

This figure hides the true extent of underfunding, with some remote schools receiving only a third of what they would get if they were funded based on enrolments.

School attendance under the so-called 'effective enrolment' policy is plummeting across the NT, with an average of only 41.2 per cent of students attending at least four days a week in the CLC region, the southern half of the Territory.

"Remote students in government schools are the biggest losers under this policy," Mr Turner said.

The policy wipes out any progress federal funding for remote and disadvantaged children could achieve.

"Remote government schools currently cannot cope with additional students because they are not be able to support them," he said.

"The policy is fuelling a race to the bottom when it comes to attendance and student achievement."

A 2022 review of the NT's policy by Deloitte's found that the effective enrolment policy created uncertainty, prevented investment in quality engagement strategies and "led to band aid solutions to boosting attendance".

Mr Turner said even remote students with good attendance faced enormous barriers because their schools don't offer secondary education.

"It is deeply unfair that our children have to leave home and become boarders if they want to go to High School – a hurdle that is too high for most. This is not a real choice for Aboriginal families."

"This is a clear-cut example of where a voice to parliament would hold governments accountable for the tax dollars they receive and to provide local knowledge and advice that ensures they are spent where they are most needed and make a difference on the ground," he said.

"We appeal to all Australians to vote Yes so that governments can be held accountable for education spending and meet the needs of all our children into the future."

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