

## Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Northern Territory Isolated Children's Parents' Association

Reference Type: Education association

State or territory: NT

Serial Identification Number: 480616

## Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

Teaching roles in Distance Education (DE) Schools with 'almost' equal responsibility and importance falls on the shoulders of the Home Tutor (HT) or Governess. The HT delivers the daily lessons and immediate feedback and correcting of students' work in the physical school room.

HT's are instrumental in the successful delivery of students education. An academically successful DE student is always the result of an engaging HT. Government funded HT's would ensure HT's are focused on the students' education.

A formally recognised pathway for Home Tutors who teach in the Rural & Remote classrooms wishing to pursue a formal career in Distance Education through recognition of the work they have done would ensure schools' generate a succession of DE Specific formally educated teachers with a genuine interest in remote teaching.

A key element in retaining 'top teachers' in Distance Education Schools would acknowledging Distance Education as a specialty in teaching. Specific training and skills are required to effectively teach Distance Ed, and the understanding of not only teaching remotely, but the use of technology and co-ordinating lesson delivery with Home Tutors (who often possess no formal teaching experience or qualifications or handling multi-age classrooms). Teachers who grasp a holistic approach to teaching are by far the most successful. (School, Home Tutor, Family, Industry – DE students revolve around the industry their family are associated with eg. Police Force in remote communities, Pastoral Industry, Parks and Wildlife etc). It's imperative that DE Teachers are fully aware of the specialty roles and duties involved with teaching in DE and Schools of the Air (SOTA) Schools. This should be offered as a specialty area when finishing a teaching degree for teachers wishing to undertake a career in DE. Teachers who excel in the DE Schools need to be rewarded and recognised as specialist teachers, through remuneration, peer acknowledgment, and title.

Programs such as 'Specialty DE Program' would ensure teachers receive the recognition they deserve from working in the specialised field of DE. Only qualified DE teachers should be allowed teaching roles in DE schools.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Rating: 7

## School and Community

Rating: 7

## Information and Communication Technology

Reliable Skymuster NBN including RSP's and landline Telephone's at the very least are required for the successful delivery of Distance Education (DE) and School of the Air (SOTA) lessons.

A continued satisfactory level of daily schooling cannot be achieved when students experience internet drop outs and interferences with their data.

Rating: 7

## Entrepreneurship and schools

Rating: 7

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Affordability is a barrier to accessing high quality boarding education; if boarding were more affordable it would help expand choices therefore opportunities for RRR students.

Currently states contribute different levels of financial assistance towards boarding costs, tuition and travel allowance. The cost of accessing a boarding education from the Northern Territory is more expensive, with less choice, than other states in Australia. This definitely reduces RRR students ability to access high quality education without excessive financial investment and is out of reach of most families.

Most geographically isolated students are not entitled to Abstudy Assistance. Children of pastoral industry families, remote police, teachers, health professionals, pilots, council staff and other residents of small rural and remote communities are often unable to fulfill their full academic potentials due to lack of family finances, meaning they are unable to attend appropriate boarding schools.

On the completion of primary school, boarding schools are an attractive option for geographically isolated children because besides providing a high quality education, they facilitate socialisation with peers, provide a wide variety of sport, arts & music opportunities as well as subjects and classroom experiences the student may not otherwise experience during their school years. Families choose a particular boarding school for a range of reasons, including subjects and school focus'.

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 6

## Diversity

Rating: 6

## Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 7

## Additional Comments

In the Northern Territory, we have vast distances and a reasonably small population, 30% of our population are indigenous (ABS 2011). These factors create unique and challenging considerations when thinking about ways our schools can improve opportunities for regional, rural and remote students.

NT ICPA member families by the very nature of distance education already have a direct responsibility in education as they use their personal resources and infrastructure to fulfill this responsibility.

Improving opportunities for rural and remote families, who are directly responsible for the daily delivery of their students education includes financial support in recognition of the permanent and necessary home tutor supervisor, for students from pre-school onwards.

There is considerable added pressures on remote families financially as they are responsible for employing a governess/home tutor or forfeit a wage and teach themselves or perhaps the most common scenario is the HT role being tacked into the already time poor mothers role.

Families are not only responsible for the supervision and shared delivery of distanced education, but they are responsible for the cost of it as well, which does little to improve opportunities.

EXAMPLE: Mum and dad have 3 children and live on a property 350km from the nearest town. Besides this family, six other people live and work on this vast piece of land, raising cattle for the beef industry. Mum cooks for the staff, does the bookkeeping, office administration, gardening, cleaning, and is the home tutor for her three children. Often mum leaves the children in the class room to work quietly while she deals with her other responsibilities, she knows they could do so much better if they had more of her attention, but she is busy. If the family could afford a governess then mum could concentrate on her responsibilities of running the property and looking after her family. But they can't, so mum takes on the responsibility of delivering her children's education, on top of everything else. If only a public school was just down the road.

In addition, distance education requires ITC, so it continues that reliable internet, with speeds to match, is necessary for students and home tutors to receive the teaching and support they need.