

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Education:

Funding for Remote Schools

1. The school budgets for my region show that most schools have a budget in 2021 that is similar to or less than the school budgets of 2015.

a) Given that populations have increased over time, why are schools not seeing greater education budgets?

The Department of Education (the department) provides annual funding to Northern Territory (NT) government schools using the School Resourcing Model (SRM) funding methodology, of which there are 3 funding components: facility funding, targeted funding and student needs-based variable funding.

Student needs-based variable funding includes funding calculated through the Student Needs Based Funding Formula (SNBFF) and Student with Disability funding¹.

The SNBFF funding uses a school's calendar year effective enrolment², scaled for the movement between term 1 week 4 enrolment from the previous year to the current year, to determine the number of students that a school is funded for. This term is known as "funded students".

The 2021 funded students for the 15 schools³ in your electorate decreased overall by 166 when compared to 2015. Eight out of 15 schools experienced a total decrease of 392 funded students and 7 schools increased by 226.

Increases and decreases in a schools funded student number results in increases or decreases to a school's funding each year.

1 Student with Disability funding was introduced into the SRM in 2020. Funding is provided to schools based on a student's level of adjustment as per the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on School Students with Disability captured at August Census.

2 Effective enrolment is a measure that combines both enrolment and attendance data to determine effective attendance, being the number of students at a school in front of the teacher.

3 Schools included are: Areyonga, Baniyala, Gapuwiyak, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nhulunbuy High, Nhulunbuy Primary, Numbulwar, Ramingining, Shepherdson, Willowra, Yirrkala, Laynhapuy Homeland and Yuendumu Schools.

b) Why do schools in large communities, such as Gapuwiyak, Maningrida, Shepherdson College all have significantly less in their budgets?

As identified in question 1.a above, the majority of school funding is provided to schools through the SNBFF based on a school's funded student number. Funded students for the large communities of Gapuwiyak, Maningrida and Shepherdson College have reduced in 2021, when compared to 2015. This has resulted in decreased funding for these schools. Table 1 refers.

Table 1: Comparison of Funded Students 2015 and 2021 (Gapuwiyak, Maningrida and Shepherdson College)

School Name	Funded Students		
	2015	2021	Variance
Gapuwiyak School	224	127	-97
Maningrida College	400	300	-100
Shepherdson College	356	255	-101

2. Budget Paper 3, in the 2016/17 financial year estimated that the overall 2015/2016 Education expenditure would be \$931 685 000. This year there is a projected budget of \$1 184 774 000.

That's an increase of approximately \$250 million since the 2015/16 budget – but none of it has come to remote schools. Please provide a detailed and itemised explanation of which areas of the Education budget have increased to the combined total of \$250 million?

The department budget has increased by \$253m between 2015-16 Estimate compared with 2022-23 Budget.

The increase in budget is predominantly due to the increase in revenue for the department, including \$175m increase in Commonwealth appropriation received under the National Schools Reform Agreement for both government and non-government schools and \$27.9m in additional Output Appropriation from the NT Government. The budget allocated to government schools through the School Resourcing Model (previously Global School Budgets) increased by \$171m, from \$388m in 2016 to \$559m in 2022, including centralised school costs.

Non-government sector expenditure over this time has increased by \$63.2m, which includes expenditure funded by the Commonwealth and NT Government.

Expenditure budget has increased over time to account for parameters on wages, operational expenses and grants. There is also additional expenditure for government employee housing, which was previously paid by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities and increased depreciation expenses due to an increase in property, plant and equipment assets owned by the department.

- 3. The current budget outlines staffing at 4364 FTE, this is an increase from 4131 in the 2015/16 budget. Please advise what these 300 positions that have been created are, as well as the breakdown of staff for the entire 4364 positions including how many of these positions are school based, and how many are corporate positions, and what type of positions these are?**

Currently, the department classifies FTE as service based or non-service based.

Service based staff occupy a position that provides a direct service to children, students or families, and/or directly conducts activities to operate a service (including schools and early childhood services).

All positions attached to schools are considered service based, including teachers, assistant teachers, principals, service or school administration staff.

If a corporate position provides a function that could be conducted from a school directly and provides services to students, families or the community, it is recorded as service based.

Staffing in the 2022-23 Budget is 4364 FTE, which reflects the March 2022 quarter average. This represents approximately 90% service based staff and 10% non-service based staff. This measure was not in place at the time of the 2015-16 Budget.

Unfortunately, the department is unable to provide a full listing and breakdown of all staff positions. This question may need to be referred to the Department of Corporate Digital and Data.