

Estimates Brief
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Brief No. 1.0.50

Issue: School Autonomy and Independent Public Schools

School Autonomy and Independent Public Schools

Speaking Points:

- Increasing the level of school autonomy is a priority for the NT Government as outlined in the Strong Society goal of the *Framing the Future* strategic plan and the department's strategic plan *Creating Success Together*.
- Introduction of Global School Budgets and Independent Public Schools are the two key initiatives in the NT Government's effort to increase autonomy for government schools and improve overall school performance.
- These initiatives will build on the existing level of autonomy that government schools currently exercise. Schools will operate with reduced red tape and principals will be empowered to make the decisions that are right for their students and school community.
- Introducing a student-centred, needs-based methodology for distributing funding to schools through global school budgets, is the feature initiative in this work.
- Schools will be provided a one-line global budget with funding allocation based on the individual needs of each student and the differing characteristics of each school. They will have the flexibility to allocate these resources as needed to deliver the educational services needed in their school community.
- Global school budgets will be introduced in all government schools from 2015 and \$5M has been allocated in 2014-15 to support the transition to the new funding model (\$17M in total over three years).

DoE 2014-15 ESTIMATES BRIEF


- Global school budgets will provide schools with greater independence and flexibility in determining how they use the resources provided to them, and will enable schools to target available funding to the areas of most local need.
- Global school budgets will provide schools with a simple and transparent funding model that will ensure available resources are distributed equitably across all schools. Schools will be more accountable to their local community about their school performance and how they have used their resources to support better outcomes for students.
- Independent Public Schools is a further step in autonomy and will also be introduced in 2015 in a small number of schools that 'opt in' to accepting more authority and accountability for their affairs. They will remain part of the public education system and be required to work within the associated industrial relations and legislative frameworks, but will operate under different accountability and governance structures to other schools.
- Independent Public Schools will have authority to exercise greater control over their day to day operations and make local decisions in areas such as staff recruitment and selection as well as the teaching and learning program.
- Implementation of increased school autonomy is being funded from within existing departmental resources and a small project team has been established to lead this work. Representative school principals are also closely involved in implementation planning.
- The Australian Government has committed \$1.6M over four years to support the implementation of greater school autonomy. This funding is planned to be substantially used for capacity building programs and systems development. As the agreement has not been finalised, this funding is not yet reflected in the department's budget.

Background:

- Professor Stephen Lamb – an independent national expert in student needs-based funding models is assisting with this work.
- There is significant work to do to ensure schools are adequately equipped and supported to work more autonomously. The NT is learning from what is being achieved nationally in this area, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia, to inform the development of options that will best suit Territory schools.
- Significant effort will be focused on supporting school leaders, their business managers and school councils to build their capability to operate successfully within an increasingly autonomous environment. This includes training and development programs as well as online tools to assist with planning, monitoring and reporting.
- Independent Public Schools will be an 'opt in' arrangement where only those schools that can demonstrate readiness and capability to work with this increased autonomy will transition to the new model.
- It is likely that only a small number of schools (less than five) will commence operating as Independent Public Schools in the first year.
- The current review of the NT's *Education Act* is also considering any legislative change needed to enable greater school autonomy. Current legislation will not be an impediment to commencing this work, however some elements of the Independent Public Schools initiative, particularly relating to the establishment of school boards, will need legislative change to be fully implemented.
- A Principals Reference Committee has been established to contribute expertise to the planning and implementation of this reform to ensure it provides the best opportunity for Territory schools to deliver quality education services.
- A diagram of the continuum of school autonomy proposed for the NT is at Attachment A.

Budget/Expenditure:

	\$000
2013-14 Budget Estimate	192
2013-14 Expenses (at 31 March 2014)	42
2014-15 Budget	5 660

	Centrally Supported Schools (<i>Indigenous Education Review</i>)	Locally Managed Schools (<i>Status Quo</i>)	Independent Public Schools
	Increasing Autonomy 		
Resourcing	Global School Budgets		
Model Selection	Mandated	Current Arrangement	Opt in Selected on Capability
Curriculum	Centrally Directed Teaching & Learning Program	School selected Teaching and Learning Program	
Human Resources	Central Recruitment and Placement System – Principal Selects Staff		School Managed recruitment and selection
Accountability	School Accountability and Performance Improvement Plan		Business Plan and Performance Agreement
Governance	School Council – Principal Reports to Regional Director		School Board – Principal Reports to CE
Facilities Management	Centrally Managed Infrastructure Works Program		Possibility for additional flexibilities to be explored

