



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Petition

Registration No.	14
Title	Bilingual Programs in NT Schools
Presented on	9 June 2009
Presented by	Mr Mills
Referred to	Education (Henderson)
Date referred	9 June 2009
Response due	14 October 2009
Response received	20 July 2009
Response presented	17 August 2009

Petition

TO THE HONORABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY:

Clerk of the Assent

Dharuktja Dhuwala Djambulu-Maypa

Language has many layers of meaning.

We the undersigned respectfully show that the statement on October 14th 2008 from The Northern Territory Minister of Education and Training mandating 4 hours of English from January 2009 will mean that:

- Current Bilingual programs are effectively closed against the wishes of the communities involved. This decision undermines the Government's commitment to consultation with Indigenous communities before decisions are made and breaks existing Remote Learning Partnership Agreements.
- Access to English literacy and knowledge of Western curriculum areas will be significantly more difficult if understanding is not achieved first in the language that the children speak. National and international best practice highlights the importance of using children's first language to support the learning of a second language (in this case English) and learning in other areas such as Mathematics.
- The nationally and internationally recognised work done by the NT Bilingual Program in collecting and maintaining language resources will be discontinued (this is part of the heritage of all Australians).
- Aboriginal teachers and education workers will have greatly reduced career paths.

- The rights of Indigenous people are being undermined: The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14.1 states: *Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.*

YOUR PETITIONERS URGENTLY REQUEST THAT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR BILINGUAL PROGRAMS IN NT SCHOOLS. AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Response

On 9 June 2009, Petition No. 14 was presented and read in the Legislative Assembly. The Petition concerned Dhuruktja Dhuwala Djambulu-Maypa Language has Many Layers of Meaning. I respond to the Petition pursuant to Standing Order 100 as the Minister for Education and Training.

The Petition read in the Legislative Assembly bore 12 signatures and called for the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to maintain and strengthen support for bilingual programs in Northern Territory schools.

In October 2008, the former Minister for Education and Training announced that the first four hours in each school day would be taught in English in all schools across the Northern Territory. This announcement followed concern about the literacy and numeracy outcomes being achieved by Indigenous students.

English is the language of learning in Australia. It is the language on which success at schooling is measured, and it is the language of our economy. Proficiency in English literacy and numeracy is critical if students are to complete their schooling successfully and to progress into work, training or university.

The first four hours of English policy provides students in remote and very remote communities with increased opportunities to learn and practise their English literacy skills. Each school has the flexibility to implement this policy in a way that best meets the needs of their school and the local community. This policy does not preclude the use of a student's first language, in fact, scaffolding of concepts taught in English using the home language is encouraged to assist in learning.

As part of the Transforming Indigenous Education package announced in 2008, the Government has shown its commitment to furthering the career paths of Indigenous teachers and education workers through the Growing Our Own initiative. This initiative aims to build the Territory's local Indigenous education workforce and increase the numbers of, and skills among, Indigenous school based and corporate staff.

I am absolutely committed to working with communities to ensure that educational delivery is appropriate to the local needs so that all Northern Territory children are provided opportunities at school that will enable them to develop the skills required to participate fully in the economic and social development of the Northern Territory and the nation.

