

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

7th Assembly

12/02/1996

95. **Hearing Impaired Students - East Arnhem Region**

Mr. STIRLING to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

QUESTION

1. Did the Estimates Review Committee make a decision to abolish the position of the itinerant teacher serving hearing impaired students in the East Arnhem Region.
2. If the answer to question 1 is yes, how does this accord with agreements under the Aboriginal Education Policy, goal number 14, which seeks to have special assistance provided to Aboriginal students with hearing loss problems, in particular, the provision for additional advisory staff to assist teachers in developing teaching programmes specifically designed for hearing impaired students.

ANSWER

Answered on 17/06/96

1. Yes.
2. The Member for Nhulunbuy has raised this same matter several times during Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and previous Ministers have provided him with briefings about the special assistance services in East Arnhem region provided for Aboriginal students suffering hearing loss. There are two programs that address specific hearing needs for students in East Arnhem and provide advisory services for teachers.

In one program, students with sensorial neural hearing loss are provided a service on a needs basis and usually once per term by specialist staff from Darwin. The students also have the additional benefit of daily part-time instructor support in schools. The part-time instructor support is a significant enhancement to the previous service. The regular daily support to students encourages sustained attendance at school. This leads to improved access to mainstream learning experiences and curriculum outcomes. Many part-time instructors are Aboriginal people, working with the students in a local community setting. This has been beneficial for the communities and individuals concerned because it has raised awareness of this form of hearing loss among Aboriginal people.

The other program is the NT Aboriginal Hearing Program (AHP). This program employs a full-time Education Officer in East Arnhem. The officer identifies strategies to reduce the

impact of hearing loss on students who have suffered the ear disease Otitis Media. The disease causes conductive hearing loss among many Aboriginal students. this officer also advises community members and teaching staff on preventive measures. The advice is often provided in partnership with the local community health clinic that also provides other preventive and curative services for the students.

The AHP has also employed part-time instructors for specific projects in the program..