



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 45

WRITTEN QUESTION

Ms Uibo to the Minister for Education:

Truancy Officers

Regarding your policy to issue infringement notices for children who do not attend school, please advise:

1. Will infringement notices be issued directly to children aged 15 and 16 years old and will they be liable to pay the notice?

Infringement notices may be issued to a student who is a child living independently as defined in section 10 of the *Education Act 2015*:

2. What enforcement or compliance activities will be taken to pursue the non-payment of an infringement notice?

The Fines Recovery Unit (FRU) in the Northern Territory (NT) oversees fines and payment arrangements on behalf of the NT Government. Receivers of fines can pay online, by mail, or in person at the FRU or any court in the NT. The FRU can also arrange deductions from people receiving Centrelink payments.

3. What training is provided to Truancy officers, and what regulatory checks must they undergo before commencement?

A school attendance officer (SAO) must complete the following induction and training:

- NT Education Act Authorised Officer training
- NT Government records management
- Student education data reporting and recording systems
- Safe and Supportive De-escalation training
- Trauma Responsive Practice in Education
- First Aid Training
- 4 Wheel Drive Training
- Department of Education and Training Orientation

Other NT Government training including:

- Appropriate Workplace Behaviours
- Mandatory Reporting of Domestic Violence

- Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse
- Foundational Cross-Cultural Training
- NT Government Code of Conduct
- Working with Children Clearance (includes Police Check)

4. What qualifications is required for Truancy officers?

A SAO is employed in the Administrative classification and therefore is not required to hold formal qualifications.

5. What engagement has occurred with schools and local communities prior to the introduction of these infringement notices?

Infringement notices have been included as a provision dating back to the NT *Education Act 1996*. At that time the penalty was \$200.

6. What engagement has occurred with schools and local communities since the introduction of these infringement notices?

With respect to the establishment of the new SAO positions, a wide range of internal and external stakeholders have been communicated with. This includes education peak bodies and Aboriginal organisations.

7. From where do truancy officers source their information about student non-attendance and what engagement do they have with principals to understand a family's circumstances before issuing an infringement notice?

A SAO sources information from student attendance data and records management systems. Infringement notices are not issued without consultation and agreement with the school where the student is enrolled. A SAO issues infringement notices only after engagement efforts have been made with the student and family to re-engage the child back into education.

8. What is the school non-attendance threshold for issuing an infringement notice?

Unreasonable adherence to requirements of a Compliance Notice and/or chronic deprivation of access to education.

9. What consideration is given to families escaping domestic, family or sexual violence prior to an infringement notice being issued?

A SAO engages directly with families to understand their circumstances including domestic, family or sexual violence and consults with other organisations and agencies to ensure a holistic approach is taken to safeguard victims of abuse.

10. Are Northern Territory Police accompanying Truancy Officers when they issue infringement notices? If so, how often?

On occasion, the department has requested NT Police assistance when there are safety concerns for staff issuing compliance or infringement notices.

11. From August 25, 2024, how many warnings and infringement notices have been issued to parents and students?

As of 10 January 2025:

From 25 August 2024 to 13 December 2024, the department issued 551 compliance notices and 42 infringement notices (fines).

12. How many instances have been recorded of principals and school staff being verbally abused as a result of an infringement notice being issued?

The department does not centrally collect this information, however anecdotal evidence suggests it is minimal.