



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 289

## WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Jo-Anne Hersey MLA:

### **School Attendance Enforcement**

1. How much revenue is expected from school attendance-related infringement notices in 2026–27?
2. Has the Department evaluated whether attendance-related fines improve school attendance?
  - a. What were the KPIs, and how is performance tracking against them?
  - b. What evidence does the Department hold that fining parents improves educational outcomes for children?
3. Reports and inquiries have identified racism, discrimination and cultural safety concerns as factors affecting school engagement for some Aboriginal students. How has the Department assessed the extent to which these factors contribute to non-attendance, and how is that being addressed alongside enforcement measures?
4. Where a child is not attending because they feel unsafe, excluded or unsupported at school, what evidence does the Department hold that fining their parents addresses the underlying cause?
5. What attendance improvement target was set for the Attendance and Engagement Officer program?
  - a. Has the program met that target?
  - b. If not, what changes are being made?
6. The Government has spent or committed \$21 million on Attendance and Engagement Officers. What measurable outcomes has that investment achieved?
  - a. How many additional students are attending school as a direct result of the program?

- b. What is the cost per additional student attending school?
7. How many fined families subsequently improved attendance, and how many did not?
8. What proportion of fines were issued to Aboriginal families?
  - a. Where a figure for an individual region or school is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
  - b. If Aboriginality is not recorded against a compliance notice or fine, in which system is the recipient recorded, and in what format?
9. In January 2026 the Minister stated that in 2025 School Attendance Officers issued 1,398 compliance notices and 292 fines, of which 679 notices and 33 fines were revoked, and characterised those revocations as evidence that parents were complying. Of the revoked notices and fines, how many were revoked because the notice or fine was issued in error, was successfully challenged, or was withdrawn for a reason other than subsequent attendance?
  - a. What proportion of all compliance notices issued in 2025 were subsequently revoked?
  - b. On what evidence does the Department attribute revocations to improved attendance rather than to error or successful challenge?
  - c. In which system are the grounds for revoking a compliance notice or fine recorded, and in what format?
10. What assessment has the Department undertaken of the underlying causes of school non-attendance?
  - a. How much non-attendance is attributed to housing instability, health issues, transport barriers, racism, and disengagement or unmet learning needs, respectively?
  - b. Has the Department quantified these factors, and can that analysis be tabled?
  - c. How does fining parents address those underlying causes?
11. What attendance rate does the Government expect to achieve next year, and over the next five years?
  - a. What evidence supports that forecast?
  - b. At what point would the Government conclude the current approach is not working?

12. Has the Department evaluated whether welfare payment sanctions improve attendance outcomes?
  - a. What evidence supports this approach?
  - b. Has the Department assessed unintended consequences for children and families?
13. What measurable evidence demonstrates that these enforcement measures are improving attendance outcomes?
  - a. If that evidence cannot be identified, on what basis is the Government expanding enforcement rather than independently evaluating whether it works?
  - b. If attendance rates have declined, what is the basis for continuing the current approach?
14. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026–27 publishes attendance rate targets separately by Aboriginal status. For government preschools the 2026–27 targets are at least 88 per cent for non-Aboriginal children and at least 53 per cent for Aboriginal children, against 2025–26 results of 87 and 51 per cent. For government primary and secondary schools the non-Aboriginal target has been raised from at least 86 per cent to at least 88 per cent against a 2025–26 result of 85 per cent, while the Aboriginal target is retained at at least 60 per cent against a 2025–26 result of 55 per cent.
  - a. On what basis is the Aboriginal attendance target set at 53 per cent for preschool and 60 per cent for primary and secondary, and when was each last reviewed?
  - b. Why was the non-Aboriginal primary and secondary target raised for 2026–27 against a result that did not meet the 2025–26 target, while the Aboriginal target was retained unchanged against a result five percentage points below it?
  - c. Is it the Government's position that an Aboriginal student attending 60 per cent of the school year meets the Department's expectation, and how does that sit with the enforcement of compulsory attendance against parents?
  - d. How many of the compliance notices and fines issued in 2025 were issued in respect of Aboriginal students, and how many in respect of non-Aboriginal students? Where a figure is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
  - e. By what date is the Government aiming for parity between the two attendance targets, and what funded measures are directed to

closing the gap in 2026-27? Please identify any of those measures that is also counted toward increasing enrolment.

- f. For 2026-27 the enrolment target for Aboriginal preschool students was lowered from 1,200 to 1,150, and the attendance target for Aboriginal primary and secondary students was retained at 60 per cent while the equivalent non-Aboriginal target was raised. Taken together, what increase does the Government expect in 2026-27 in the number of Aboriginal children actually attending, expressed as a number of children rather than as a rate?