



Media Release

AEU NT Members Condemn the NT Government’s Disregard for Young People and Educators in Owen Springs Closure

The Alice Springs Regional Council* of the Australian Education Union Northern Territory Branch has voted to condemn [the actions of the Northern Territory Government](#) in moving the young people held at the Owen Springs Detention Centre from Desert Country to Saltwater Country. The Council also voted to express its displeasure with the lack of communication, consultation and support provided to the Sub-branch members of Owen Springs regarding the closure of the school and their abrupt redeployment. Teachers working part-time at Owen Springs were deployed to other public schools when they had pre-existing responsibilities elsewhere, they were informed of their temporary postings a matter of days before the school closed, and all they knew was that they would be offered new positions elsewhere in the Department, with no indication given as to where, in what capacity, or even if they would be based in Alice Springs or in Community.

Statement from the AEU NT Alice Springs Regional Executive**

“This government’s decision reflects an expectation that the number of children incarcerated will rise (perhaps unsurprising given [its decision to lower the age of criminal responsibility](#)), but moreover, it treats these children as a logistical exercise, not as people with a right to family support or connection to Country.

This is not in keeping with best practice, lacks consultation with families and contravenes [Articles 5 and 37\(c\) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Additionally, this action failed to consider the wellbeing of members and the needs of their families. At a time when the NT is experiencing a teacher shortage, the Northern Territory Government’s poor communication led to valuable teachers leaving the Department of Education and Training feeling unsupported and unvalued.

The NT Government’s actions treat both students in custody and their teachers as afterthoughts. Major changes with serious consequences require meaningful consultation and respect, not secrecy and chaos.”

Quotes From Australian Education Union NT Branch President – Michelle Ayres

“Our members were deeply invested in these students. They are not mere statistics or political fodder; they are human beings. Education is key to rehabilitation, yet the NT Government’s top-down decisions have disregarded this. Uprooting students from the educators who have built trust with them undermines their learning and future.”

“Blindsiding educators and displacing vulnerable students without proper consultation is unacceptable. We condemn this as a failure of leadership and care from the Northern Territory Government.”

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Context Statements

*The Alice Springs Regional Council is the representative decision-making body of the Australian Education Union Northern Territory Branch (AEU NT) for educators in the Department of Education and Training's Central Region. It brings together teachers and support staff from Primary, Middle, Senior, and Special Schools, including both remote and regional schools. Any AEU NT member in the region has the right to attend, contribute, and vote on motions, ensuring that decisions reflect the collective concerns and priorities of educators. The Council plays a crucial role in advocating for fair working conditions, responding to government policies, and addressing workplace issues, ensuring that the interests of educators and students are effectively represented.

**The Alice Springs Regional Executive is elected from within the Council and provides strategic leadership in coordinating meetings, shaping advocacy efforts, and implementing Council decisions. Comprised of a cross-section of educators working in varied school settings and roles, the Executive ensures that regional perspectives are represented at a Territory level. They engage in consultation with key stakeholders, monitor the impact of government decisions, and work to safeguard the rights and conditions of both educators and students.

Contact: Michelle Ayres, AEU NT Branch President, 0437 574 980