

# Secondary Reform Program – moving away from middle schools

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why is the NT Government moving away from middle schools to this new system of comprehensive secondary schools?**
  - Through consultation with teachers, parents and students, the *Review of Secondary Education in the NT* found that the middle school model in the NT isn't maximising outcomes for students. Moving to comprehensive schools will reduce the transition points for students and support greater continuity of relationships and learning. It will provide teachers with wider professional opportunities and provide more opportunities for schools to provide industry pathways and programs linked to employment or further study.
- **What is a specialist industry, trade and technical college?**
  - Industry, trade and technical colleges are for students in Years 10, 11 and 12 and offer a unique mix of school-based and vocational training. They focus on preparing students for careers in key industries like engineering, construction, community services, education, and health. Students complete their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) while also gaining nationally recognised vocational qualifications (like Certificates II and III).
  - These colleges will be designed with local industries to make sure students learn the right skills in spaces that feel like real workplaces. Students also get hands-on experience through work placements while they study.
  - Industry, trade and technical colleges help students step confidently into apprenticeships, traineeships, jobs, or further study at university. When they graduate, students leave with their NTCET, job-ready skills, valuable work experience, and strong connections to local employers.
- **What schools will be impacted by move away from middle schools?**
  - A total of nine government secondary schools in urban areas are impacted by the transition to the new comprehensive secondary education system. These schools will either be expanded, restructured or combined. The schools are Casuarina Senior College, Darwin Middle School, Darwin High School, Dripstone Middle School, Nightcliff Middle School, Sanderson Middle School, Palmerston College, Centralian Middle School, and Centralian Senior College.
- **How was the community engaged in shaping the future design for secondary schools and what were the key areas of concern?**
  - During March and April 2025, the Department of Education and Training undertook a comprehensive engagement process with school communities across Darwin, Palmerston, and Alice Springs on the proposals for each school. This included briefings with every impacted

school, school-led information sessions, information sheets, and an online survey open to all stakeholders.

- More than 1,100 people responded to the survey, including 261 parents and carers, 147 teachers, employees, and school leaders, and 686 students. The feedback showed strong support for the proposed changes. Key areas of focus raised by the community included infrastructure, resourcing, student pathways, enrolment areas, student wellbeing, and communication.

## Workforce changes and support

- **Will there be any changes to principal roles?**

All current principals of the nine schools that are in scope of the middle school's reform will remain in their current positions until the end of 2025. Planning is underway to recruit to transitional principal lead positions for each of the combined Darwin Middle and High schools and Centralian Middle School and Centralian Senior College, and a principal for the new Palmerston high school at the Rosebery site.

- **How will school employees be supported through this change?**

- We are working closely with school employees to support them through the transition—this includes workforce planning, wellbeing support, and professional development to prepare teachers for new subjects and year levels.
- Changes to school employees will be managed in accordance with change management industrial obligations and consultation processes under the Northern Territory Public Sector guidelines and appropriate care and transition support will be provided throughout the change process.

- **How will teachers be supported to prepare for teaching new subjects and year levels?**

- Teachers will be well-supported as they transition to teaching a broader range of year levels and subjects.
- Many middle and senior years teachers are currently qualified in secondary education. The move away from the middle schools model allows these teachers to fully apply their training by teaching across Years 7 to 12, strengthening continuity and relationships with students.
- Professional development will be provided to support this transition including training for current middle school teachers to prepare for teaching NTCET subjects, and support for senior secondary teachers to deepen their understanding of middle years' teaching and learning approaches.
- This approach ensures all teachers are confident and equipped to deliver high-quality education across the full range of secondary year levels.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Student support

- **How will students be supported during the transition?**
  - Supporting students is at the heart of this change. We heard through consultation that some students are feeling apprehensive about the change. Special attention will be given to student wellbeing and engagement, especially for those with additional needs or who may be vulnerable during the transition.
  - School leaders and teachers will continue to monitor and support student wellbeing and capture student voice. Student wellbeing and behaviour management programs currently offered will be tailored to support students through the change.
- **What students will be impacted in 2026?**
  - Students who are moving into Year 10 in 2026 will be the first to experience the new comprehensive secondary education model. These students will have the option to remain at their current school, where they will access a comprehensive Year 10 program designed to prepare them for career and industry programs and pathways in Years 11 and 12.

## Programs and pathways

- **What programs and pathways will be offered to secondary students in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs?**
  - All secondary schools in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs will provide a high-quality secondary education with a range of academic subjects and vocational education and training (VET) pathways available to students.
  - Schools within each region will work together as a network of schools to ensure all students can access a wide range of programs and pathways regardless of their home school.
  - In 2026, current middle schools will expand to offer a comprehensive Year 10 program that prepares students for career and industry programs and pathways in Year 11 and Year 12.
  - Information about the broader range of career and industry programs and pathways available across the network of schools will be shared in Semester 1, 2026, allowing students and families to make informed decisions and prepare for 2027 enrolment.
- **What are career and industry programs and pathways?**
  - The Northern Territory Government wants to help students to move into real and critical jobs after they finish school.
  - Career and industry programs are a set of subjects and courses that enable access to a specific career or industry pathway.
  - Schools will be offering programs and pathways that match different careers and industries to help students learn the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for work or more study.

Through these programs and pathways students will have opportunities to engage with VET and NTCET subjects. These programs will be developed with schools during 2025 and 2026.

## Enrolments

- **Will current priority enrolment areas change from 2026?**
  - In considering the shift away from middle schools in Darwin and Palmerston, priority enrolment areas were reviewed for 2026.
  - There is no designated priority enrolment area for Alice Springs.
  - In Darwin:
    - There will no longer be a priority enrolment area for Casuarina Senior College. Career and industry programs and pathways offered by Casuarina Senior College will be available to all Year 10 – 12 students in greater Darwin and Palmerston regardless of their home school.
    - The existing priority enrolment area for Nightcliff Middle School will be in place for the full comprehensive year 7 – 12 school. For 2026 only, current Nightcliff Middle School students moving into Year 10 can also be considered for enrolment at the combined Darwin Middle/High school.
    - From 2028, or once established, career and industry programs and pathways offered by the industry, trade and technical college in Sanderson will be available to all Year 10 – 12 students in greater Darwin and Palmerston regardless of their home school
  - In Palmerston:
    - There will be two priority enrolment areas for the new comprehensive high schools in Palmerston. The priority enrolment areas were subject to consultation at the start of the year and will align to existing primary school areas east and west along Chung Wah Terrace.
    - These areas align with the existing priority enrolment areas of Palmerston Primary Schools, ensures a balanced distribution of students between the two high schools and align most suburbs with their nearest school – allowing students to attend the school closest to where they live. This approach also accommodates both current and future population growth, particularly in developing areas such as Zuccoli.
  - Priority enrolment areas will continue to be monitored throughout the transition and reviewed if deemed necessary. Information on these changes along with the updated enrolment area maps will be made available on the Department of Education and Training website and communicated to school communities in Term 3, 2025.
- **How do I know which school to enrol my child in, and how do I enrol them?**
  - Learn more about the priority enrolment policy on the Department of Education and Training website to identify where your local secondary school is [education.nt.gov.au/secondary-education](https://education.nt.gov.au/secondary-education)
  - All students in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs will continue to have access to high-quality government secondary education and a wide range of learning pathways through their local

school, regardless of where they live. Providing flexibility and choice for families remains a key priority in the Territory's secondary education system.

- If you are considering enrolling your child at a school outside your priority enrolment area, please discuss this with your local school principal. Enrolment outside the local enrolment area will be considered on a case-by-case basis with priority given to students living in the priority enrolment area.
- Students transitioning to Year 10 in their current school are not required to complete a new enrolment application.
- Contact your local school or follow their social media page to find out more about their enrolment timing and process.

## School structure and governance

- **Will there be changes to school names and when will they be announced?**
  - Schools, in consultation with their communities, will propose new school names in line with school naming policies and guidelines throughout Term 3 2025, as well as any changes to school logos. These changes will be communicated to the community once determined.
- **What will happen with school uniforms?**
  - School councils and boards will make the decision regarding uniform choices, pricing and staged implementation for their school. Schools will have measures in place to ensure families are not disadvantaged if the school transitions to a new uniform.

## Infrastructure and logistics

- **Will there be investment in infrastructure to support the change away from middle schools?**
  - We are reviewing and identifying infrastructure, transport, and technology needs to support the new school designs and to facilitate network of pathways between schools.
  - The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training, has assessed the existing facilities at affected middle and senior secondary schools to identify any upgrades needed to ensure schools are fit for purpose to deliver comprehensive secondary education.
  - Infrastructure improvements needed for schools introducing new year levels in 2026 have been identified and will be rolled out ready for students next year.
- **Will there be changes to bus routes?**
  - Bus routes are currently being reviewed and will be updated as required to reflect changes in school priority enrolment areas and student numbers.

## School funding

- **Will additional funding be available to support this change?**
  - In 2024, the Northern Territory Government signed the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* with the Commonwealth Government. This agreement provides a significant funding uplift for schools from 2025 to 2029, which will directly support the transition to the new comprehensive secondary education system.
  - This additional funding will help ensure schools are well-resourced to deliver high-quality learning experiences and implement the new school designs effectively.