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EVENT NAME:	Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) National Conference
TIME:	8:30am
DATE:	22 October 2007
VENUE:	Crowne Plaza Darwin
PROPOSED SPEAKER:	Mrs Margaret Banks

DOT POINTS ON THE ISSUE

- It is my pleasure to be here today to open the Australian Council of State School Organisations National Conference on behalf of the Hon Paul Henderson, Minister for Employment, Education and Training.
- I welcome you all to Darwin for this annual conference of Australia's peak public school parent's body. It has been seven years since Darwin was the venue for this Conference, and there have been significant changes to education in the Northern Territory in that time.
- Over the next two days speakers and delegates will get the opportunity to share their expertise on important topics such as Indigenous and Rural Education, Engaging with Asia and Languages Education, Curriculum and Values and Wellbeing, amongst others.
- These are topical issues, of much importance to Australian educators, and of particular relevance in the Northern Territory context. So I am pleased that the Australian Council of State School Organisations has chosen to hold these important discussions here, in the Territory.



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- I will be particularly interested in your ideas and input on Indigenous education.
There has been recent media attention focused on the work of the Cape York Institute in Queensland, the publication of the *Little Children are Sacred* report and the Australian Government intervention in the Northern Territory. This has resulted in renewed attention on the topic of overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage.
- There is still much to be achieved in educational outcomes for Indigenous people. In 2004, 39.5 per cent of Indigenous students in Australia progressed to Year 12 compared with 76.8 per cent of other students.¹
- The 2006 Census data indicates that 455 031 people, or 2.3 per cent of the total population of Australia identified themselves as Indigenous. Broken down into state and territory figures it is clear that the Northern Territory population has the highest proportion of Indigenous people at 27.8 per cent of its total population, well above the national average of 2.3 per cent.
- The numbers of Indigenous students living in remote and regional areas where employment opportunities are limited make the development of strategies for transition to higher education and training of the highest priority.
- In the Northern Territory, and nationally, work is progressing on the development of valuable school and community partnerships that will build on trust and cross-cultural respect to achieve quantum improvements in Indigenous outcomes.
- There is clear evidence that an effective relationship between parents and schools is a critical factor in the educational performance, engagement and motivation of students. School Councils are an excellent example of this partnership. School

¹ *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008: page 27*



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Councils represent the aspirations of parents in the community and I know that

Territory schools work very closely with their school councils.

- I wish to thank you for allowing me to open your National Conference on Education, bringing together principals, teachers, academics, parent representatives, community organisations and other stakeholders from across Australia. I look forward to hearing about the results of your discussions and insights into the 'New World' of education.

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