

Question on Notice

No. 1473

Asked on 16 November 2023

MR J LANGBROEK ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to school attendance in Aurukun—

Will the Minister advise (a) what the department has done to improve school attendance rates in Aurukun and (b) the department's target for school attendance in Aurukun for this year 2023 and next year 2024?

ANSWER:

School attendance rates at Aurukun State School are affected by several factors, including the impact of Sorry Business, ongoing low socioeconomic disadvantage and concerns for community safety for a large number of students enrolled at the school.

In relation to part (a), a whole-school attendance, engagement and enrolment strategy has been co-designed with school staff and Aurukun community members and includes identifying and tracking every compulsory school aged child living in Aurukun and actively increasing enrolments from 135 in 2020 to 246 students in 2023.

The Remote School Attendance Strategy Team, funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, uses a case management approach to ensure students with less than 20% attendance have been prioritised for Re-Engagement Case Management and/or referral to the Family Responsibilities Commission. Students with more than 20% attendance but less than 85% are referred to the Student Attendance Team which carries out regular home visits.

Over 40% of secondary aged students at Aurukun State School have been recently identified as having a mild to moderate disability, reflecting on the high needs in this cohort.

Aurukun State School has had success with improved attendance and access to learning for students with moderate to high needs. Support for these students included the employment of a local Students With Disability Teacher Aide and engagement activities for students with diverse needs such as the inclusion games in Cairns.

Schools teaching First Nations languages have shown significant changes in First Nations students' attendance. Aurukun State School teaches Wik-Mungkan language on Wik and Wik Waya Country.

The Language teaching team is led by a Language Owner who is an experienced educator and a non-Indigenous linguist. Other Elders and community members support the program throughout the school year.

In relation to part (b), while the department strongly supports improved attendance for all students through the *Every day counts* strategy, it does not set attendance targets for schools. The department works with individual schools to improve overall school attendance. Aurukun State School's attendance rate has improved from 42.7% in 2021 to 48.2% in 2023.