



Northern
Territory
Government

DEPARTMENT OF
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Chief Executive's Student Forum

Student Handbook

2008

Student Handbook

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WELCOME FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Congratulations on becoming a member of the 2008 Chief Executive's Student Forum (CESF).

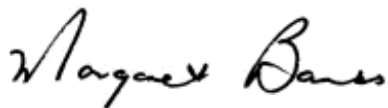
The 16 students selected for a place on the forum have been chosen from across the Northern Territory as representatives of the almost 10 000 Government secondary school students. You have been selected because of your outstanding qualities and your desire to improve education in the NT.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training is committed to extending opportunities to students to assume a range of roles in educational forums and to participate in decision making.

The CESF will provide you with an opportunity to have direct access to senior departmental decision makers, and you will be able to provide input in a meaningful way on policy and strategies. Your input will be invaluable in helping us to shape the future of education in the NT.

As a former teacher (and a student before that!) myself, I am aware of the rare opportunity that this forum will provide for students. I certainly wish that I had such an avenue to raise my educational concerns and issues when I was at school.

I would like to thank each of you for willingly giving your time to becoming a member of the CESF. I am very much looking forward to working with such an outstanding group of students



Margaret Banks
CE



ABOUT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STUDENT FORUM

Purpose – why we have the Chief Executive's Student Forum

The Chief Executive Student Forum (CESF) is part of the Building Better Schools initiative. As part of building stronger school communities, it was proposed to extend opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making. The CESF was developed to obtain direct input from young people on the education system, and to provide them with an avenue to raise their educational concerns and views.

It consists of a group of 16 senior secondary government school students from across the Territory.

These students will discuss issues directly with the Chief Executive and other senior departmental decision-makers, ask questions, and make recommendations.

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to develop a range of communication, interpersonal, team participation and leadership skills.

Objectives – what we aim to achieve

- To provide senior secondary students with the chance to share their concerns, views and experiences directly with the leader of the Department of Employment, Education and Training – the Chief Executive
- The CESF aims to overcome the notion that many students believe that they have very little opportunity to impact on any real decision making with regard to their education
- It is an opportunity for the Government to ask these senior secondary students how their policies affect them. It allows the Chief Executive to obtain direct input regarding education policies and initiatives from the very people that it affects the most – you, the student
- To assist students undertake representational and leadership roles within their schools and communities
- To engage, inform and strengthen school communities

What does it mean to be a CESF member?

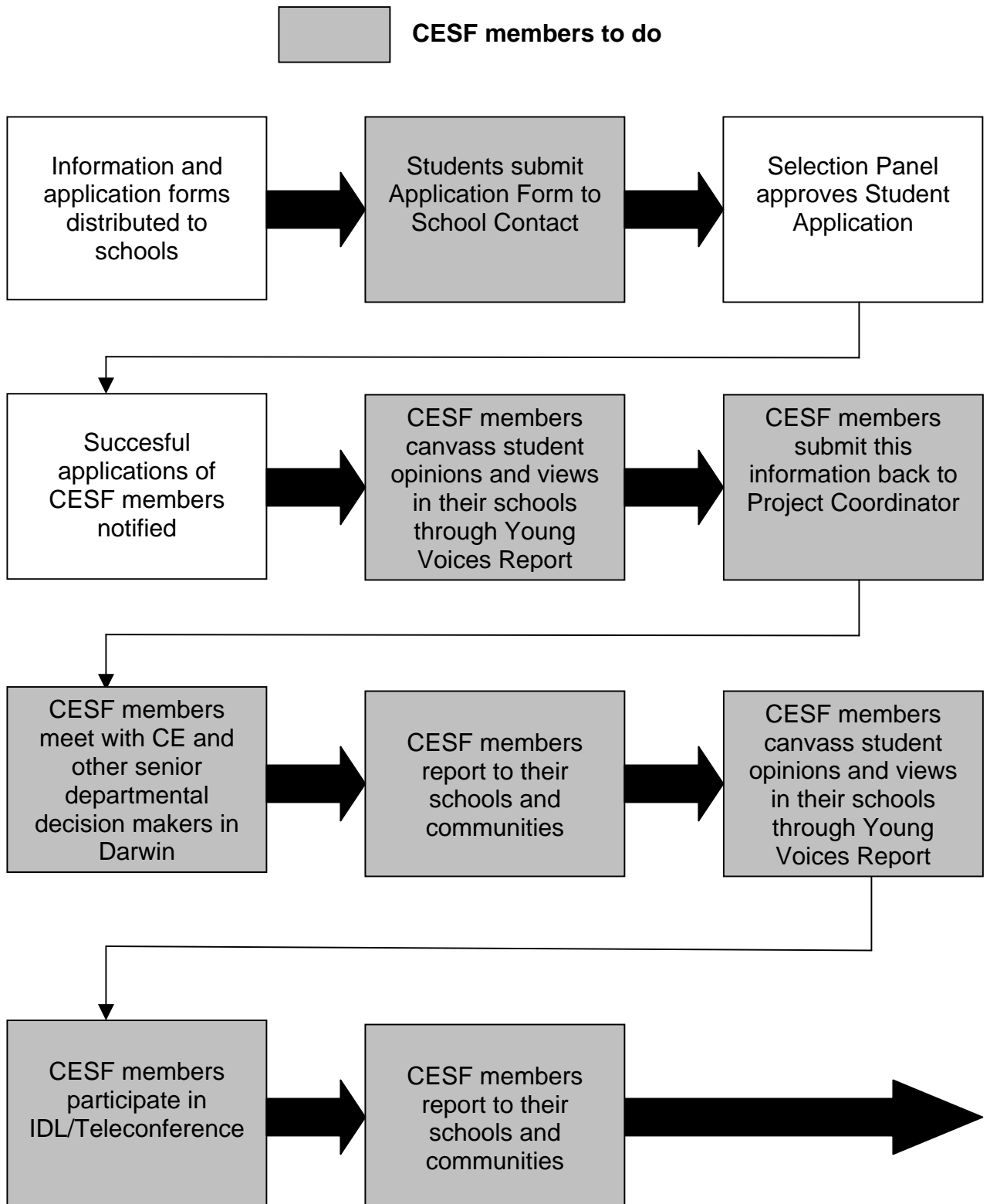
It's all good! Being a member requires commitment and dedication. As a member of the Chief Executive's Student Forum you:

- Will have an excellent opportunity to speak with senior management and the Chief Executive of the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)
- Have the opportunity to contribute to the positive image of young people
- Make new friends and meet a broad cross-section of other like-minded students from across the Northern Territory – remote and urban, male and female, Indigenous and non-Indigenous
- Have a direct voice to the Education Department about issues that are important to you and to other students
- Can contribute your experiences, perspectives and concerns to discussions in an environment where you will be heard
- Will be a voice and a representative for school students, and you will be actively able to canvass and represent the views and issues of other secondary students throughout the Northern Territory
- Will have an opportunity to gain NTCE credit for forum participation
- Will be part of a new and exciting opportunity – with the chance to lay some solid foundations that will impact on the shaping of future CE Student Forums

Outline of the program of events

What happens	When it happens
<p>Young Voices Report circulated to students</p> <p>Young Voices Report sent back</p> <p>Students participate in face to face meeting</p> <p>Students Report Six Distributed</p> <p>Students report back to their schools and communities on recommendations</p> <p>Students participate in IDL/Teleconference</p> <p>Young Voices Report circulated to students</p> <p>Young Voices Report sent back</p> <p>Students participate in face to face meeting</p> <p>Students Report Seven Distributed</p> <p>Students report back to their schools and communities on recommendations</p> <p>Students participate in IDL/Teleconference</p> <p>Applications Open for New Students</p>	<p>2008</p> <p>4 February</p> <p>20 February</p> <p>26 February</p> <p>14 April</p> <p>16 April – 15 May</p> <p>26 May</p> <p>21 July</p> <p>4 August</p> <p>11 August</p> <p>12 September</p> <p>15 – 24 September</p> <p>21 October</p> <p>5 November</p>

How does the Chief Executive's Student Forum work?



How often will the forums be held?

In 2008, there will be four forums

- Two will be held in a major centre so that some representatives will have to travel to attend. Remote students may be away from their schools for 2 – 3 days.
- Two will be by teleconference/IDL and will be for part of a day.

GUIDELINES

Code of Conduct

Being a member of the Chief Executive's Students Forum is a fantastic opportunity for you to promote the positive image of secondary students and young people.

As a member of the CESF, your behaviour should be considerate of other members' needs and should enhance the reputation of the forum.

The most important thing to remember is that the CESF is conducted on a solid foundation of respect. As a guideline, student members of the CESF are expected to:

- Attend all meetings and teleconferences (members will be excused if there are exceptional circumstances but adequate forewarning and a reasonable explanation must be given)
- Commit to contributing at all meetings
- Feel comfortable in voicing their opinions and in respecting the opinions of others
- Adhere to the directions of the supervising CESF officials
- Remain on the premises while CESF meetings are being conducted
- Not consume alcohol or any other intoxicating substances whilst performing their duties as a CESF member
- Respect and recognise the skills and talents of other members as different from their own
- Remember that when travelling, attending functions, or staying in accommodation for the purpose of the CESF, you are a representative of NT senior school students, and you should conduct yourself accordingly
- Participate in any media interviews/photo requests
- Understand that serious misbehaviour or misconduct will result in your removal as a member of the CESF

Contact with the media

Students debating educational issues and suggesting recommendations to the CE is a great news story. The CESF will generate community and political interest throughout the NT.

To ensure the integrity of the CESF, and to project a consistent approach Territory-wide when dealing with the media, all contact with the media must be cleared with the Project Coordinator – Trevor Read

As a member of the CESF, you may be called upon to undertake media appearances and duties – you might even get your picture on TV or in the paper!

CESF MEETINGS

What to expect

CESF meetings are a fantastic opportunity to influence the future of education in the NT. You will get to directly inform the Chief Executive and other senior departmental decision makers of the educational issues affecting students in your schools and communities.

The CESF is also a chance for you to meet and speak with other inspirational students from across the NT who have been selected as outstanding representatives. You will also learn about what is happening in their schools and communities, and of the issues that students face in both urban and remote schools. You will develop excellent leadership and team participation skills, and your presentation skills will be enhanced through reporting back to your schools on the recommendations developed through the CESF.

You will also get to travel to Darwin and meet the CE. You will no doubt make new friends with the other students, who like you, are the selected representatives from around the NT. And the best thing is...we'll pay for your travel, most meals and accommodation.

What to wear

At teleconferences, CESF members can wear what they would normally wear to school.

When attending the meeting with the CE in Darwin, it is necessary to wear appropriate clothing. We recommend that you wear something clean and neat and preferably not sleeveless - this meeting will be in air-conditioning. Be aware that you may be getting your photo taken.

How the forums work

Before a forum

Students gather a range of views on educational issues by completing a *Young Voices* Report. Reports are circulated before each forum so that students can prepare themselves for discussion.

The *Young Voices* Report asks students to report on any recent educational events, activities or programs that are happening in their school or local region and reflect on the opportunities these are providing for students. The *Young Voices* Report also requires students to canvass a range of views on matters relating to schooling in the Territory. These can be issues of concern, suggestions for improvement or simply topics for discussion.

The *Young Voices* Report is then forwarded to the Project Coordinator.

During a forum

Each forum is divided into three sessions:

- *Session 1* is focused on preparing students for their time with the Chief Executive. Students choose four issues for discussion that they would like to concentrate on
- *Session 2* is attended by the Chief Executive and is the time for direct discussion and debate
- *Session 3* involves development of recommendations and a summary, reflection and evaluation of the first and second sessions

Session 1: Preparation

Face-to-face - 3 hours

Students discuss the issues raised in the *Young Voices Reports* and identify what they wish to raise with the Chief Executive in the second session.

If appropriate, students could divide themselves into groups of four and each group could choose one of the issues to prepare. Groups could work collaboratively to draft notes for their presentation of the issue and devise related questions for the CE. If possible, groups formulate potential solutions or suggestions for these issues. In the face-to-face forum, students will also participate in team-building exercises and receive ongoing coaching in public speaking skills and appropriate and effective conduct during forums. In the future, some preparation sessions might involve guest speakers or related activities.

Session 2: Discussion

Face-to-face - 2 hours 30 mins (including an informal lunch)

Students present prepared issues to the Chief Executive and other senior departmental decision-makers. They engage in discussion surrounding these issues and any related topics which may arise. Students ask questions of the CE and respond to any that the CE has in return. Students raise possible solutions or suggestions to their issues and discuss these with the CE.

It is during this time that students will have an opportunity to provide input on upcoming DEET initiatives. The DEET executives will discuss future educational proposals. Student feedback will prove invaluable in helping to shape these planned initiatives.

Each of the 16 students will be given an opportunity to speak directly with the CE. The Program Coordinator will chair each forum.

Session 3: Evaluation

Face-to-face - 2 hours

Students complete summary sheets outlining what was discussed, questions that were raised and responses that were given. This is to be used when they report back to their schools and communities on the progress of each forum (a summary of these recommendations will be provided by the Program Coordinator).

Students will also reflect on what worked well in their presentation of each issue and what they would like to improve on for next time. An evaluation sheet will be completed, and the recommendations raised in this will inform future forums.

Teleconferences/Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) links

Teleconferences/IDL are an essential communication tool for CESF members. As members will come from all parts of the NT, teleconferences/IDL are a fantastic way to keep in touch and 'meet' without the need for extensive travel or being away from school and family.

Teleconferences/IDL will be organised by the Project Coordinator, and will be held at the most convenient location for CESF members. For Darwin and near-Darwin students, this may be at the DEET offices in Mitchell St. For other students, this will be at their schools.

To participate in a teleconference, all members will be given a user ID and pin number for access. You may be able to attend these with your school contact.

Students will be required to supply a digital photo of themselves so that we all know what each other looks like.

As the technology develops, there may be the opportunity to communicate via videoconferencing.

Face-to-face forums

In 2008 the first face-to-face CESF will be conducted on 26 February. This forum will be held in Darwin at the DEET headquarters in Mitchell St. It will take place over the course of one day, and catering will be provided. This is the chance to actually meet the people that you have spoken with on the phone.

The format will be the same as the teleconference. As time constraints won't be so tight, there will be more time for preparation and discussion of the issues and concerns that you have about education in your school or region. An agenda will be prepared and timeframes will be worked out before this forum commences

Students will get to meet with the CE and other senior departmental decision makers, and also with the other members of the CESF. A lunch will be held where students will be able to talk with the CE in an informal environment.

This forum will also provide an opportunity for the CE and DEET executives to ask students for their feedback on any upcoming DEET initiatives. Your input will become invaluable in helping to shape the future of education in the NT.

What to bring

To teleconferences – a summary of the Young Voices Reports, pens and paper

To the meeting with the CE – nothing! Pens, paper and handouts will be provided, and we'll have a summary of the Young Voices Reports. Morning, afternoon tea and lunch will also be provided. There is nothing else that you need to bring except your self and your positive attitude.

TRAVEL

Who pays?

When you travel to the CE Forum in Darwin, we will pay. The Project Coordinator will organise for CESF members to attend this formal meeting and will pay for, and book, plane flights or bus tickets, and accommodation if necessary.

How does it work?

Especially when travelling from remote communities, travel in the NT is very expensive. As travel will be at the public expense, it is very important to use the most cost-effective travel methods.

OPPORTUNITIES

Of course, the most obvious opportunity is that you will have a direct chance to participate in the shaping of education in the NT – rather than having your opinions on education filtered through your teachers or principal. As you will get to meet and speak to the CE and other senior departmental decision makers, the raising of your concerns and issues will allow you to provide input in a meaningful way on educational policy and strategies.

Also, you will have the opportunity to influence further Chief Executive Student Forums, as you are the first students to undertake this program. The good work that you do as a member of the inaugural CESF will impact on the future success of such programs in the future.

What benefits can you expect from being a member of the CESF?

Lots of fun. You will get to meet a lot of like-minded students, who will join you as the selected representatives from across the NT. You will make new friends and you will share in the concerns and achievements of other talented and enthusiastic NT students.

You will also be provided with the chance to further your leadership skills, by being involved in a representational role for your school and community. Plus, you will also get better at presentation skills, by reporting the outcomes of the forums back to your school community.

And...you'll have an excellent addition to your resume. The inclusion of your membership of the CESF, and the participation in this exciting program will look fantastic to any future employers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens if a student breaches the Code of Conduct?

The last thing that we want to happen is for someone to be expelled from the CESF – but we need guidelines in place to help influence your performance and to provide procedures of acceptable behaviours. Depending on the nature of the breach, students will be reminded of their roles and responsibilities whilst a member of the CESF. If the breach of these guidelines warrants stronger intervention, the Project Coordinator will determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Will being a member of the CESF be a huge drain on my time and will it affect my schoolwork?

No the CESF won't be too much of a burden. Before each meeting you will need to canvass the opinions of some of your friends and fellow students at school, and after the forums, you will need to present the findings to your school or community.

Will I be able to voice my opinion...and will these be acted on?

Yes! You will be able to directly communicate with the CE and other senior departmental decision makers.

The purpose of the CESF is to provide a voice for students with regard to their education, so your opinions will be highly valued and your input will be used in a meaningful way to inform educational policy and strategies. The CESF is not a 'feel good' exercise for DEET – the department is very interested in your opinions and your input.

Do I need any special skills to be a member of the CESF?

No. You don't need any special skills to be involved in the forum, but you must have a genuine interest in education and in providing a representational and leadership role for other students.

Where can I find out more information about the CESF?

Check out the Building Better Schools website at www.betterschools.nt.gov.au or contact Project Coordinator Trevor Read on 8901 1384 or email trevor.read@nt.gov.au