



Syd Stirling

MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

9 March 2006

NEW STUDIO / SOFTWARE FOR KATHERINE SCHOOL OF THE AIR

Minister for Employment, Education and Training Syd Stirling today launched a new Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) studio for Katherine School of the Air, and a new IDL software system that will improve the delivery of education services to students and distance education communities across the Territory.

He said it positions us as a world leader in distance education delivery, teaching and communications.

“Government is proud to support the development of IDL facilities and, as part of the *Building Better Schools* initiative, we are investing \$1.8 million towards developing distance education services,” he said.

“The new studio showcases specially-designed REACT software, developed from a Microsoft platform and modified for the Territory’s requirements for more exciting and engaging lessons for students.”

Kevin Ackhurst, Director of Public Sector, Microsoft Australia said: “By partnering to create the Interactive Distance Learning system, Microsoft and the Territory Government are demonstrating how technology is enriching education for students in remote locations.

“With advances in technology, the tyranny of distance is now more likely to become a thing of the past and Microsoft is proud to be able to work with the Territory Government to deliver this great initiative.”

This new equipment is vital to Government’s delivery of education services to School of the Air, distance education and students in isolated indigenous communities at 150 new two-way sites and 27 existing sites.

Communication will now be streamed from three IDL studios – the new Katherine studio, and studios in Alice Springs and the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (or NTOEC) in Darwin.

The software opens up life-long learning opportunities for secondary students, indigenous students, remote teachers and school staff, community members, remote families and VET students.

“We will see growth in the use of the software system by the VET sector because it allows greater flexibility and new options for programs that had been difficult or impossible to offer,” he said.

Multiple cameras in the new studio means students will see their teachers and their teachers’ computer desktops, and the two-way stream of vision is only a small step away.

Previously, education at Katherine School of the Air was delivered through a combination of correspondence material, HF radio, patrol visits and school ‘get-togethers’. The new facility means teachers don’t need to make a 600km weekly trip to access the technology and students can use it daily. Katherine School of the Air opened 16th June 1966 and covers 800,000 sq kms.

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