

Plan to pay up and fly out

By DAVID WOOD

A PRIMARY school teacher who allegedly inappropriately touched male students and told them she had a dildo and might be a lesbian was to have her contract paid out, a letter from an Education Department official shows.

In the letter — obtained by *NT News* — the Department of Education rural region school performance director Hylton Haynes said the remote teacher was to be flown interstate at the taxpayer's expense and her contract paid out.

The teacher is still registered in the NT and the incidents — which occurred in May last year — were not fully investigated by the department.

The department's School Education deputy chief executive, Susan Bowden, yesterday said the matter was referred to police.

She denied the flight and contract were paid for.

"Preliminary disciplinary proceedings commenced," she wrote.

"During proceedings, the teacher took sick leave and flew interstate to seek support from her family."

"Her contract of employment expired soon after and was not renewed."

But in the letter Mr Haynes wrote in May last year, he said the teacher would "take sick leave for two weeks and two weeks covered by (the department), which will finalise her contract".

"Other staff will be advised that (the teacher) is leaving to deal with personal business," he wrote.

Mr Haynes wrote another letter, saying the teacher could — depending on her response to the allegations — teach in the second semester of 2013.

"The Teacher Registration Board involvement is unlikely though again dependent on your response," Mr Haynes wrote.

There were several incidents in 2013 allegedly involving the teacher reported at the remote school by indigenous children.

One involved her squeezing two 12-year-old boys' bottoms more than once and saying to one: "You have a skinny bottom."

The teacher denied this allegation. One of the boys said the teacher told them she had a vibrator at home.

One boy said he did not like going to class because he was afraid she would touch him. Another said he felt shame when he was around her.

The boy said the teacher told him he was "a gay" and that she said she had a husband but that maybe she was a lesbian and she was going to marry her girlfriend.

Union fears role change for bus security officers

THE Territory Government has moved the operations of the transit safety officers — who provide security for bus drivers — to the Casuarina interchange.

Transport Workers Union NT organiser Elise McLay said the union believed the Government wanted the transit officers to replace the role of two security guard

positions being trialled and due to finish tomorrow.

The Government said this was not the case and Transport Department chief executive Clare Gardiner-Barnes said that the security guards would stay but refused to say for how long.

Ms McLay said the officers were also scared about having to walk from their cars to

the interchange because of the chance of dealing with potentially violent people they had dealt with before.

The Government also refused to provide statistics on how many incidents officers were called out to.

But Ms McLay had figures for the six months to January last year when there were 79 incidents on the bus

network that transit officers could not make it to because they dealt with other cases.

She questioned how they would be able to provide security for the interchange if the trial security guards were taken away. On each shift there are two cars with two officers in each.

Ms Gardiner-Barnes said that they were upgrading

CCTV cameras at both the Casuarina and the Palmerston interchanges.

The interchange security was brought in on January 22 after a female bus driver was hit over the hit with a whisky bottle.

A moving bus was also hit with a rock thrown by a child in Karama on Tuesday night.

Asbestosos danger at Darwin dump

By KATINA VANGOPPOULOS

ASBESTOS has been found at a Darwin dump alongside one of the city's busiest roads, sparking concerns for nearby residents.

Anthropologist Dr Bill Day — who took a sample for testings — said chrysothile asbestos, which is found in insulation, was evident at the Ludmilla Heights dumping site off Dick Ward Drive.

He said the discovery was a worry for the residents at Minnamama Village, and the environment.

"Kids go playing in there, the transporting trucks bring dust past the community's properties — it's alarming," he said.

"There's no such thing as a safe level, even one fibre could cause a deadly cancer to any individual."

Dr Day has been involved in settling the area as a conservation zone for decades, and hoped work on the stockpile would immediately stop.

"They started dumping here in 2006, they get rid of everything . . . poured wet concrete," he said.

"Further testing must be made for the presence of dangerous substances."

In April 2010, the Development Consent Authority was set to issue an order ruling the site unlawful.

It had drawn complaints from Minnamama residents, and from residents of the wider city who labelled it an eyesore.

Nearly four years on, Dr Day said he was unhappy the issue had not been resolved.

"This stockpile was established on land granted to Aboriginal people as a conservation zone," he said.

"It compromised the integrity and purpose of the lease," he said.



Dr Bill Day says tests have found asbestos in the dirt piles near Minnamama Village in Ludmilla

Picture: ELISE DERWIN

Remote hopes of road upgrades turn into reality

MAJOR upgrades to regional roads — hailed as the key to unlocking remote NT's economic potential — are in the pipeline with a \$106 million package to be co-funded by the federal and NT governments.

Chief Minister Adam Giles also announced yesterday

that work on the \$108 million duplication of Tiger Brennan Drive, between Woolner Road and Berrimah Road, would begin in August. And that announcement sparked a war of words yesterday.

Federal Labor Member for Lingiari Warren Snowdon said: "I agree that these six

road projects are examples of the kind of infrastructure investment that is desperately needed in the NT.

"That is why we announced the exact same list of projects in August 2012."

Mr Giles said the announcement would be "mutual to the ears of Palmerston

residents in particular, cutting congestion and commute times". The regional works include the Roper Highway, Port Keats Rd, Arnhem Link Rd, Buntine Highway, Central Arnhem Rd and Santa Teresa Rd.

Mr Giles said that would "improve access, safety and

reliability of the freight corridors, increase efficiency of freight movements and boost productivity".

"Improving roads servicing regional and remote communities in the Territory will boost local economies and bring social benefits to NT communities," he said.