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Good afternoon,

I know the last couple of weeks have been challenging and I would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication to our Territory children and for your resilience and flexibility in these unprecedented times.

Things are very uncertain right now and I know many of you are anxious about remaining in our schools. As a former teacher, I truly empathise with you. Please know that each and every one of you is invaluable and your work is vital. It is as important now as it has ever been that all our children continue to have access to a high quality education.

As you know, I established a working group that includes the Department of Education, the Australian Education Union NT, the NT Principals' Association, NT COGSO and the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment to work through options as we approach the school holiday break.

Through this group, I have heard your concerns and I have taken them to my Cabinet colleagues.

Today, I am announcing that the final four days of this school term – Monday, 6 April to Thursday, 9 April – will be professional development days for staff to prepare for the continued delivery of education in Term 2.

Students will not be required to attend during this period, however, our schools will remain open for the children of workers who cannot make alternative arrangements and for any vulnerable children who may need to attend. It is of the utmost importance during these few days that no child is turned away.

School will continue as usual next week but parents and families can choose to keep their children home if they wish. The advice of Australia's top health experts is that schools continue to be safe.

Our priority as a government is to keep Territorians safe. We are implementing tough measures, including strict border control, to make sure the risk of coronavirus spreading is kept as low as possible in the Northern Territory.

The health and wellbeing of every Territorian is of equal importance right now. Please look after yourself and your colleagues, particularly your mental wellbeing, and access the Employee Assistance Program where you need to.

We are in this together and we will get through this together.

Yours sincerely

SELENA UIBO