OUT OF THE FAT INTO THE FIRE?

The Territory Opposition is concerned the massive influx of children into care over the last decade has not been matched by the necessary increase in resources to allow Child Protection to cope.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report shows there were 451 Territory children placed on care or protection orders last year; in 1997, that figure was 111.

“Are the kids being taken into care receiving proper care from the Government?” asks Jodeen Carney, Leader of the Opposition.

“Unfortunately due to the fact the Minister for Family and Community Services, Marion Scrymgour, has refused to release the complete findings of an independent audit of client care across the Department, we can't be sure that is the case.

“If there were no problems, there would have been no reason for withholding the main body of audit.

“In truth there are plenty of indications that FACS is buckling under its workload.

“The rape of a young girl in care, the death of a 12 year old girl in foster care and the death of an uncle of a 17 year old youth who had contact with the Department, all last year, suggest deep seated problems in the Department.

“The downgrading of official response times to initiate investigations into children at risk of abuse also suggested FACS wasn’t coping with its workload.

“The subsequent revelation that the Department was failing to achieve even the downgraded response times, highlighted how dire the situation had become.

“The Opposition believes children at risk of serious harm should be removed but they must receive proper care once under state supervision.

“The Minister should release last year’s audit into FACS to enable a better public assessment of the situation.”

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