Country Liberals

Media Release

Out of His Depth

Robyn Lambley MLA

Date 21st June 2011

Child Protection Minister, Kon Vatskalis, is out of his depth and lacks the insight to properly manage the portfolio.

During today’s Estimates Committee hearings, Mr Vatskalis was silent while the Departmental CEO claimed special review teams’ flagged in the Care and Protection of Children Act had not yet commenced.

Shadow Child Protection Minister, Robyn Lambley, said Mr Vatskalis should have known the ‘review teams’ actually began operating in December 2008.

“It is no reflection on the CEO, who is relatively new to the position, that Minister Vatskalis isn’t across his portfolio,” Ms Lambley said.

‘Estimates would have been a perfect opportunity for Kon Vatskalis to show the depth of his understanding in this crucial and troubled portfolio area. Instead, he showed his ignorance.

‘It’s likely up to 83 jobs could be lost in the area of child sexual abuse when the Federal intervention finishes next year, but he has no contingency in place if the Commonwealth funding dries up.

‘The Minister’s response is to target alcohol consumption.

‘There’s no strategy in place and no plan. He should be grateful the Commonwealth launched the intervention, but all he could do was criticise.”

Ms Lambley was also critical of the small number of cases referred to Centrelink for welfare quarantining.

‘Given the focus the Government has placed on income quarantining, it seems absurd only 56 cases around child protection income management had been referred to Centrelink,” she said.

‘Worse, among the reasons given for this lack of action, was that the issue of staff turnover and that ‘staff … trained some time ago were no longer in some offices where referrals were required to be made.’

‘This statement was proof, if indeed it was needed, of how staffing issues have affected the capacity of the department to protect the interests of children.”

Further comment: Robyn Lambley 0428 040 693