Minister for Aged and Disabilities Malarndirri McCarthy today said that she will make the implementation of the recommendations of a major disability services review a priority during this term of Government.

Ms McCarthy today met with disabilities advocate Robyn Burridge to hear her concerns regarding disabilities services in the Northern Territory.

“Mrs Burridge has told me that people are worried about coming forward with their concerns in regards to disability services, however as the new Minister I encourage any person to feel they can come forward with confidence and talk to me directly,” Ms McCarthy said.

A major review of disability services in the Northern Territory was carried out in 2006 by KPMG Consultants. This was in response to the challenges facing the sector in providing high quality services to those living with a disability.

“Around 40,000 Territorians are living with disabilities – with around 40% of this number being Indigenous,” Ms McCarthy said.

“I can give my absolute assurance to Mrs Burridge, and to all Territorians living with a disability and their carers, that the NT Government is committed to ensuring they have the best possible access to services and support.

“Demand for disability services has increased across the country, and the NT Government is addressing this need with major funding injections into the sector – including doubling funding since coming to Government – up 109% since 2001.”

Ms McCarthy said the Government did acknowledge that there was a lot more to do, however this review provided a roadmap for the future with recommendations about how to best reform the sector.

“Already we are seeing tangible examples in our regions such as the transfer of 287 CDEP positions to real jobs as Indigenous carers for those with disabilities right across the NT.

“These are real, strong and positive outcomes on the ground from the Review’s recommendations.”

Ms McCarthy also added that the Disability Advisory Council – established under Labor Government in 2004 – would continue to work closely with the Department to oversee the implementation of the new service arrangements.

“I am meeting with the Disability Advisory Council next month so we can discuss future directions and to make sure we continue to provide the best service possible to people with disabilities”.

Contact: Maria Billias 0401 119 746